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MY LIFE STORY

BY

Eli J. Bontrager

Route 2

Shipshewana, Indiana

Written between

August 1943 and July 1957

Published June 1953 and November 1955

November 1957 - February 1960





My grandfather's great-grandfather Martin Borntrager was born in Switzerland. He left his homeland with his wife and three sons and passed through Europe to the seaport, Rotterdam in Holland. At this place he embarked for America. How long they were on the way across the sea we do not know, but at least weeks and likely months. Finally on October 5, 1767, they arrived at Philadelphia. According to tradition, he had a sad experience on the sea. His wife died and was buried in the depth of the Atlantic ocean. He filed his declaration of allegiance on the day of his arrival.

We do not know in what part of Pennsylvania he first established his home with his three motherless boys, but he finally came to Somerset county. When, or at what age he died is not known. He was a member of the Amish church. His son John also became a member of the Amish church, but his other two sons evidently did not follow in the faith of their fathers, and drifted away from home, living for a time at Meyersdale, Pa., in the southern part of Somerset county, but later moving out of the state. Christian sold his home at Meyersdale for fifty pounds, English money, to a certain Joseph Houghstetler. He was in Jefferson county, Ohio when he signed this deed. In 1922 it was my privilege to stand on the spot where he is said to be buried near Leavittsville, Ohio. He evidently came to Ohio in about 1810. The date of his death is not known.

Martin's other son, Andrew, went to Virginia, and settled near Fincastle in the Shenandoah Valley, where he died about 1809. His wife's given name was Susanna. His son David married Elizabeth Spitler, and in about 1805 they came to Warren county, Ohio. A few of his descendants still live in that vicinity, but most of them left there, and diligent search for records or traces of them have so far been futile. Whether Andrew or any of his descendants had any church affiliations, or with what denomination if any, is not known.

Among Christian's descendants we also find but few that were professing Christians. I found one family that were members of the Christian Church. Christian had two sons, John and Joseph. John's descendants are scattered throughout Ohio and several other states and they seem mostly to be good moral citizens although not religiously inclined to any very great extent.

Joseph was said to have been a heavy drinker, and, although there may not have been any criminals among his descendants, they were not a very moral class. Very few are well-to-do, and morally they are lagging behind. Family troubles and divorces are frequent among them. I am merely stating facts as I found them, and these seem to show that the Bontrager family is not noted for any outstanding achievements in any moral or Christian line. They seem to have been rather under the average in this respect. So we find that there is very little in the Bontrager background to boast of. We do not find any Bontragers in the ministry in the first two generations after Martin.

John Borntraeger, the first, who came to America with his father in 1767 married a certain Mary Falb. They also left Pennsylvania sometime in the early part of the nineteenth century, and settled in Tuscarawas county, Ohio. He, at one time, owned more than seven hundred acres of land in Somerset county, Pa. How extensive his land holdings were in Ohio is not known. John raised a family of six children, two sons and four daughters. They all became members of the Amish Church, and Christian lived and died in Ohio, while Elizabeth remained in Pennsylvania. The other four children came to the state of Indiana.

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John Bontrager, the second, was born in Somerset County, Pa., on October 3, 1781. He married Barbara Johns, daughter of Joseph Johns (or Schantz) in December, 1802. This Joseph Johns was the founder of Johnstown, Pa. The town was first called Schantztown. Their children were all born in Pennsylvania before 1827, and in about 1848 they moved to Lagrange County, Indiana, where all their children had settled before, or about that time. John died on February 4, 1856, at the age of 74 years, 4 months, and 1 day. She died May 4, 1870, aged 87 years, 5 months, and 12 days. His son Joseph, my grandfather, was among the first Amish to settle in Indiana. They came through Middlebury, and arrived at Goshen, their destination, on June 29, 1841. Joseph's wife, my grandmother, was Barbara Yoder before her marriage. They were married March 25, 1832. She was nearly four months older than her husband. They had five children when they came to Indiana.

Grandfather was ordained deacon in 1839, two years before coming to Indiana. His oldest brother John was probably ordained as a minister about the same time. They were the first Bontragers to be ordained to the ministry. John, the third, with his family came to Indiana in 1844. Among his sons, two were ordained to the ministry, and all his children, nine in number, were members of the Amish church. At this time (1943) there are, or have been at least twelve of his descendants in the ministry. John's first wife was a certain Anna Yoder and his second wife a Mary Miller whose father was a Yoder. As above stated John's mother was a Johns. It seems that as Johns and Yoder and Miller blood was introduced into the Bontrager family, its piety increased.

Joseph Bontrager, my grandfather, thus also had a Johns for his mother, and his wife was a Yoder, Barbara Yoder whose ancestry had been in the ministry for several generations back to the original immigrant, bishop Christian Yoder, who came from Switzerland to America. Grandfather Joseph Bontrager had six sons that grew to manhood and four daughters. All the daughters were married, but three of them died when they were less than twenty-eight years old, one of them less than eighteen. All three died at childbirth.

One of the sons, David, was accidentally killed at the age of eleven years and ten days. Of the six sons that grew up five were ordained ministers (two were bishops and two were deacons). The oldest of the sons, Christian, died at the age of seventy-eight, and Daniel, the youngest of the ministers (he was a deacon), died at seventy-five. My father, John E., died November 11, 1930 at the age of 93 years, 1 month, and 2 days. Eli died three weeks before father died. Both he and Joseph were nearly ninety when they died.

Father was not a large man. He was five feet, five inches tall and weighed about 145 pounds in his prime. He was very rarely sick. He had typhoid fever at the age of fifty-seven, but even then he was able to help himself in getting in and out of bed. His last illness which was mostly infirmities of old age lasted about three weeks. He could help himself during this illness and stood on his feet only three hours before he passed away.

Grandfather Joseph Bontrager inherited a strong tendency toward true piety from his mother of the Johns family. His wife, my grandmother, a daughter of bishop Christian Yoder was also a true and earnest Christian, well versed in the Bible, and deeply interested in the welfare of her children. Her Christian influence upon



her children manifested itself in all of them more or less. In her younger years she was somewhat inclined to be jovial, but my father told me that after her oldest daughter, who was also her oldest child, died at less than eighteen years of age, she never was the same as she had been before. She was ever serious-minded and brought up her family in the fear of God, and this influence manifested itself in her children. They all lived and died in the Amish faith except her youngest daughter, mattie. She changed her church affiliation in her later years to the Mennonites.

Of grandfather's six sons, five were ministers. Of his grandsons ten, and of his great grandsons at least four have been ordained to the ministry up to this time.

My father, John E. Bontrager, gained an education much above the average of his time. He taught three terms of public school when a young man. He never attended high school, but took an examination before the Lagrange county school superintendent and was licensed to teach. German at that time was also taught in the public schools, and he was well qualified to that. He also taught several terms of private German school in his later years.

When he was still a young man, two horses were stolen from his father's pasture one night. Some months later grandfather received word from some point in eastern Ohio to come and identify his horses. Father was sent to get them. He found them and identified them and brought them home. Father always was a good singer, and in Bible knowledge as well as in scientific knowledge he was perhaps several generations ahead of our people of his time. For his advanced ideas he was frequently ridiculed. The fact that he excelled others in natural talents and education, as well as in religious knowledge did not affect his humility. His advice was much sought by others in many matters of importance, both in secular as well as in religious matters.

There is perhaps a tendency among us to laud and praise the virtues of our parents and friends after they are gone and forget or minimize their faults. Father had his faults in different ways as we children all knew. Mother also often had to feel the results of mistakes that father made. However, his heart was right, and he was stern and earnest in teaching us children the Christian way of living. He took great interest in teaching us to read and understand the German language. He provided us with books and other Christian literature when we were still quite young. He subscribed for several German religious papers that were published by his intimate friend John F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana. These I was able to read at seven years of age. He bought a large Bible for me when I was still quite young, and this served as a further inducement for me to read the Bible. Many of the historical facts of the Bible were perhaps better known to me then, then they are now after being many years in the ministry. Although I knew in my younger years that I had an exceptional father and appreciated the fact, still I did not realize the value of this advantage as I did in my later years.

I also realize now that I did not, with the same earnestness, teach my children in such matters as he did and as I should have done. The way conditions are now, with so much printed matter of all kinds coming to our homes, it is really much more necessary to be diligent in teaching and explaining the Christian doctrines and way of life than in our father's days. I realize that I fell short of living up to my privileges and duties in these matters.

At the age of twenty-six my father married Barbara Mishler. She was a daughter of Christian Mishler of Johnstown, Pa. Grandfather Mishler died in Pennsylvania



when mother was a small child. Grandmother Mishler was Barbara Eash before her marriage. She later married Daniel Miller, and they, together with their children, came to Indiana in about 1860. Grandmother lived to be nearly eighty years old. After stepgrandfather's death she made her home with our parents, where she was well taken care of by her daughter, our mother, until she died in 1891.

It does not seem that the Mishlers were very religious. They were of the Amish faith, and several of my Mishler uncles, as well as my mother, became members of the Amish church. My uncles were young men during the time of the Civil War, and several of them served as soldiers. My Uncle Jacob lost a finger in the war, and Uncle Henry lost his health so that he was an invalid in his later years. Uncle John was taken sick and died in a hospital in Tennessee. Henry and Joseph and Aunt Susan were members of the Brethren or Dunkard Church. Aunt Polly was a Mennonite. Jacob and William were Amish, but Jacob in his later years, having married his second wife, went with the Conservative Amish. Isaac, the youngest, also was a Mennonite. One of his grandsons, whose mother died when he was a small child, was raised by an Amish family and joined the Amish church and later was ordained a minister and later a bishop. He, however, took sick and died in 1936, while still a young man. My Mishler uncles were mostly tall and strong men physically.

My parents raised a family of nine children, six sons and three daughters. Two daughters and one son died in early childhood. We were all indoctrinated with the Amish faith. We believed in it and accepted it and aimed to live it.

On Sunday evening, as the sun was going down, January the nineteenth, 1868, a third child and a second son was born to my parents and was named Eli. That evening I drew my first breath as I was ushered into this world of sorrow and grief. O! That I might ever after have been kept as pure and sinless as I was on that Sunday evening, seventy-five years ago.

Under the tender care of my loving parents I lived through the trying times of early childhood, with measles and whooping cough and such diseases of childhood, except mumps, which I escaped until I was fifty-one years old. No doubt that sinful human nature manifested itself in my early years and caused my parents many heart-aches even before the age of accountability. They however believed in discipline, and I, no doubt, was subject to many reproofs and chastenings with words and with the rod even before I can remember. I can well remember, however, what I would rather forget, how later on I resented their reproving at times. Although I knew in my heart that they were right, I would not admit it.

I, however, did know and realize at that time that I had a wiser and more intelligent and better educated father than the majority of boys had. He took great pains to teach us the German language and to read the Bible. A natural gift that I had was that I could easily learn and remember. I could read German before I attended public school. I had this advantage that whenever I found a word that I could not pronounce, or did not know the meaning, I could ask my father, who always knew and was very willing to help me. So I deserved no credit for myself for the fact that I got a better education than my associates did.

I always was easy for me to memorize anything that I wished to "learn by heart" as we used to say. Father encouraged me in memorizing scriptures and songs and other Christian poems, etc. At his suggestion I memorized Romans 8, Luke 2, and Acts 5, each chapter in two days time. Also Psalms 1, 90, and 146 were memorized then, and most of these have remained in my memory up to this time. I am not boasting. I am simply saying what can be accomplished when one has a God-given gift of learning and remembering, and the will to use it, and a father who knows how to teach and encourage boys.



I have nothing to boast of. In fact, I must continually upbraid and accuse myself for not making better use of these unearned gifts than I did. I feel that if I had had a more determined will I could have accomplished something in my time, while, as it is, I must wonder at times if my life has not been an utter failure. I feel that I have not used the talents and other gifts that God in His grace has given me to His glory as I should have done. I am now seventy-five years old, and to this day I feel that in my life I have fallen far short of being and doing what I should have accomplished.

Father taught us children to work when we were quite young, and I then learned to work and to do my work well. Digging yellow dock and burdock, etc., around the yards and fence rows was a continuous job in season, although I detested it. We always "raised cane" for molasses, and stripping cane was my job in season in those days. I also spent many a day alone digging potatoes with the old dunhook. I did not like to work as I was naturally lazy. However, I did not want anyone to see and know that I was lazy, and so I kept at work quite steadily. When only eight years old I was out daily in the corn field in the husking season with the hired man husking corn.

This particular hired man was of a low class as far as morals are concerned. The smutty stories that he told, and the dirty songs that he sang for me still linger in my mind after nearly seventy years. My memory recalls much of the early teaching of my parents, and as I always was an eager reader of anything that came into my hands, I can still recall many moral stories, and many good health rules, and much advice in secular and moral and spiritual matters that I read then. However, those smutty stories and songs that immoral hired man implanted in my mind have crowded out of my mind what otherwise could have had good effects upon me.

I believe now that those dirty words and deeds have been factors in filling my mind with carnal thoughts that aroused my carnal natures and gave me a continuous struggle ever after to keep my carnality from getting the best of me. "Continued struggle" is the right word.

Others may also have the same struggle but with me this carnal nature was aroused at the age of eight years in that cornfield with that immoral young hired man. He married later. I have had a lineup on him all his life. As a minister I had to deal with him, I saw him when he lived on the west coast, and during his later years when he lived near the east coast, and he never seemed to be a moral or conscientious man. He had trouble and made trouble wherever he was. His large family, with a few exceptions, are not of the desirable class of church members.

I often thought that if father had known at that time the type of young man that hired man was, and what his influence would be on his young son, he never would have tolerated him on the place. It is our sacred duty to try to safeguard our children in their tender years so that their baser nature may not be aroused while still in their childhood. I have learned this lesson, but I have paid dearly for it.

I started to school when I was six years old. George Shisler of Middlebury was my first teacher. I liked to go to school, but not just the way a certain little girl said when asked if she liked to go to school. Her reply was that she liked to go to school, and liked to come home from school, but she did not like to be there. If I had a favorite branch of study it was arithmetic. I excelled my associates in that study and remember well that I was in the same class with fully grown young men when I was but eleven years old, and I was always small for my age.



To my father I am again indebted for this advancement. I took my arithmetic--Ray's Practical Arithmetic--home with me every evening, and any problem that came up that I could not solve I had only to ask my father and he could and would help me. Most of my associates did not have this advantage. My father refused to buy me a geography and a grammar. In the winter of 1878 and 1879 Jacob C. Hershberger was our teacher. At the end of that term as a prize he presented to me a White's Intermediate Geography. During the remaining years of my schooldays this was, and still is my only geography. A year later I paid twenty-eight cents for a grammar--English Language Lessons--which I also still have in a well preserved condition.

My sole capital at that time consisted of less than a dollar, and twenty-eight cents was a lot of money and I had expected at the time that father would reimburse me for it, but he never did. What I got out of this grammar during my last three terms of school life has been worth much to me during my lifetime, although I never became an adept in grammar.

John F. Kaufman was my teacher during the school year of 1877 and 1878. I was ten years old in January, 1878. On the last day of school my teacher gave me a pretty little cloth-bound book bearing the title "A Week in a Tent." Upon the fly-leaf of this book he wrote: "A Grade. Reward of Merit, to Eli Bornotreger for the Best Deportment, Advancement, and Examinations. J. F. Kaufman, teacher." I highly prized this book and still have it in a well preserved condition, although I have often read it through.

Many severe whippings were dealt out to several different scholars during my schooldays. The whips were long and heavy hickory rods that were cut just across the road from the schoolhouse. in my father's woods. I received one whipping, though it was done with a lighter whip and one stroke seemed to have been considered enough. There were seven of us in a row. Our crime was that on that certain noon hour we had been too far away to hear the hand bell when school was taken up, and hence the whipping, as we were late coming in.

I think I also remember of having to "stand on the floor" at one time but I cannot recall the misdemeanor that caused it. I also remember that during my first year in school I at one time was in such a condition that it was necessary for me to go home and so I went and simply said "I go home." That was about the size of my English vocabulary at that time.

Spelling was also an easy branch for me, when I went to school, and I, of course, expected, and every winter did receive the most "headmarks" in my class. I, however, still make some mistakes in spelling, as any reader of this manuscript will likely see. We had a spelling match every Friday afternoon after the last recess, and, of course, it was my ambition to get the floor. One or two winters I seemed to have rather lost my interest in spelling and had several rivals. I well remember one Friday afternoon, when the whole school competed for the floor, a little second-grader got the floor. His name was Christ Miller. We also frequently had spelling matches in the evenings, usually once a week. I always attended these and also frequently attended such spellings in other districts.

Debates were also held frequently, usually weekly in our schoolhouse, which I attended regularly, although I never took active part in the debates, but did take part in the literary exercises following the debate. These debates were educational and I very well remember many facts brought out at these debates. The Methodists also held Sunday School in our schoolhouse several summers, which I also attended



quite regularly. They used the old Gospel Hymns without notes, which had just come out a few years before, and so were the new Gospel Hymns at that time.

I always was a great reader and managed to get hold of religious papers, also farm papers and other good moral literature. I learned from them many maxims and wise sayings and proverbs that still linger in my mind. Such rules as, "Never correct older persons than yourself, especially parents," and, "Never speak or read aloud when someone else is speaking or reading," have never left my memory. One item of advice in a farm magazine also stuck, as it suited me quite well, it is: "Never use a curry comb below a horse's knee." I never did like currying horses anyway.

One of our teachers, A. F. Powell, also gave us a good motto to memorize each morning, many of which I still remember, and one especially is often recalled when a meeting for any certain cause is called and some one is late, which causes others to wait and lost time. It is: "Be prompt to fulfill all your engagements. You may waste your own time but you have no right to waste the time of another." Another is: "Plow deep while sluggards sleep, and you will have corn to sell and corn to keep."

When I was about ten years old, German spelling schools were held weekly in the different homes of our church district, as well as others. These were a great help in learning the German language, to pronounce words correctly, and to understand what the words really mean.

In this as well as in all other educational undertakings my father was the chief instructor. He was well qualified for such tasks. I know of but two other Amish brethren that were his equal, or possibly better educated in the German language than he was. These were Samuel D. Guengerich, Wellman, Iowa, editor and teacher, and Bishop Jacob F. Swartzendruber, Kalona, Iowa.

When I was barely nine years old Die Mennonitische Rundschau, a German religious, and correspondence paper, was launched by the publishing house in Elkhart, Indiana, owned and operated by John F. Funk & Brother. Of course father was a subscriber from the first issue. This paper was dedicated in particular to the German Russian Mennonites who had but recently immigrated to the U.S.A. from Russia at that time. Several years before that the Burlington R. R. Co., published a paper called Der Nebraska Ansiedler. This was published in the interest of these Russian immigrants, and the company's object was to induce further immigration and settlement along their lines in the west. I had been a reader of this paper and when in 1877 this paper was changed to the Mennonitische Rundschau, I became a reader of the Rundschau and have been reading it ever since during the sixty-seven years of its existence. Its first editor was J. F. Harms, now of Hillsboro, Kansas. He was called from Nebraska to Elkhart to edit the paper. On May 14, 1935, I visited J. F. Harms in Hillsboro and took supper with him, which he had prepared himself. His worthy wife had passed away just a short while before. He is still living, and is now more than ninety years old. Another editor of the Rundschau was G. G. Wiens, late of Los Angeles, Cal. I stayed with them one night in Reedley, Cal., in 1904. In February of 1943 we visited him in Los Angeles, just ten days before he died. The paper is now published in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. It is now 67 years old, and I have been one of its readers during all these years.

I quit school when I was fifteen years old, and shouldered the ax and went to the woods to make fire-wood. I have often wondered why. I could so very well have used more education, but it seemed then that I was tired of school, so I told father one day that I would rather work in the woods than to go to school, and it was all right with him. So that ended my school days.



I was now approaching the dangerous age--the age when young folks imagine they know about all that is worth knowing. I do not think that I ever got to the point where I thought I knew more than my parents, but I did imagine they did not understand or realize our position or circumstances. The fact is that our parents saw the danger points and pitfalls that were before us children, while we did not see them or recognize them as such. I felt able and strong enough and wise enough to know what was good for me and what was not. I realize that I caused my parents many unnecessary heartaches. However, when I look back over these years I can see that my father, after all, showed that he had much confidence in me and my judgment. I was far from being an ideal, obedient boy, but he probably realized that I might have been worse. He trusted me and I do not think that I ever betrayed his confidence. I think he realized that he could depend on me to do my work well, and that my judgment was usually sound. At least I do not remember that he ever chided or criticized or scolded me for the way I did my work.

He did not even chide me when the team ran away for me and wrecked the old Buckeye table rake while cutting clover seed in the fall of 1885. Two days later I was again cutting clover seed with the old Champion wabble-gearred mower when I again lost control of the team and was thrown from the seat, getting my right foot in the left wheel, spraining my ankle and bruising my foot in such a way that to this day I can feel the effects of it. My foot and big toe still feel somewhat numb as a result of that runaway, although the team did not get away from me, as I, having hold of one line, guided them to a fence where they stopped. I turned them and mowed to the corner of the field and unhitched and, managing to get on the back of a horse, went home. Arriving there I could not put up the team or walk to the house. I, however, managed to crawl in some way. I could not walk for a week.

I have had but very few such painful experiences in my time and am very thankful for the Lord's kind protecting care and watchfulness over me during my lifetime.

In mentioning runaways, I should also mention the time when my brother Joe was driving the team for me while cultivating corn. Some wild strawberries in a fence corner attracted our attention, and, while we were helping ourselves to berries, the team became scared of some hogs that were wallowing in a mud puddle across the road and ran away, crossing a piece of stumpy new ground where the cultivator was completely wrecked. The team stopped finally in the farther corner of the field. I do not think that father chided us for this negligence of ours, but went to town and brought home a brand new John Deere walking cultivator of which I took good care, and I never left it out in the field over night as long as I was at home.

As our farm consisted of 190 acres, father always had a hired man for about nine months of the year until I was eighteen years old. After that time we got along without a man hired by the month, although we frequently had hands working by the day. We always had much ditching, fence-building, stone-picking, weed-cutting and such work to do. We never had any idle times. Others sometimes did not have anything to do, but we were never out of work.

Almost before I realized it, I had grown to manhood, and my circle of friends and associates expanded. I suppose my experience was the same as that of everybody else. Some associates are helpful and uplifting, while others encourage the baser nature. I had my share of both. Although my companions were not always of the best, I tried to avoid real bad company and was spared the temptation of getting into crimes or other destructive acts.



The time now came when I came more or less in contact with those of the opposite sex. Thoughts of choosing a life partner would enter my mind. This, to me, was a serious matter. By that time I had seen and heard enough of family troubles and disagreements and disputes that I had a perfect horror of a man and wife living such a life together. I, therefore, gave the matter some of my most serious thoughts. I always tried to be a congenial friend to everybody, and to be on good terms with all my associates, boys and girls. Although there were factions among the young people I never took sides with either side. I suppose it is human to try to win and retain the admiration of other young people and especially of those of the opposite sex. My mind would dwell on such matters while I was at work.

I have always had to do with a strong temper. I never was angry at a person but once in my life. I never seemed to be tempted to get my temper raised towards anyone, man or woman, boy or girl, no matter how they used me, but most anything else could arouse that temper of mine. I remember once while driving a team on a rather difficult ditching job, I got riled up at the team and scolded them with no complimentary terms. I stopped all at once and said to myself, "If you can not control your temper better than that you are not worthy of having a life partner of any kind." I then and there resolved that I would control my temper, which I did for quite a long while, but gradually I relaxed in my determination and my temper has caused me much trouble during my lifetime.

We were taught the importance of prayer early in life, and I memorized a short prayer which I devotedly repeated every evening upon retiring. However, I often brought my trials and problems to the Lord while at my work. I remember while still quite young the words of Paul "Quench not the spirit" lingered in my mind and I deemed it as quenching the spirit if I would not pray whenever the thought of prayer entered my mind.

I prayed over many matters and received definite answers to many a prayer, but in my younger years I never could more earnestly pray for any other matter than this, that the Lord might so lead and provide for me a wife, a true Christian, with whom I could live in perfect harmony and peace--and that he would carry us through life into a goodly age. I remember distinctly of having thought of it at the time that I did not say, to an old age, but it seemed it would never come through my lips that way.

I prayed the Lord for guidance in this important matter. I resolved to watch for his guiding hand, so as not to miss his leading in this matter. One day, at the wedding of a cousin of mine I met her. It seemed we were mutually interested in each other at once. However, for several years we only met each other occasionally. Later, however, the Lord brought us into closer friendship and courtship, and finally on December 18, 1890, we were married. My uncle Eli E. Bontrager performed the service. I soon discovered that the Lord had indeed given me a wife that was a treasure. Our honeymoon lasted not only for a month, but for nearly twenty-eight years. Our love for each other never waned and our last month together was just as much a honeymoon as the first month.

I never heard her utter an unkind word to me, to her children or anyone else. The thought of losing her by death was too awful for me to consider it for a moment. I imagined the Lord knew that I could not bear up under such a trial and would never take her away from me. But that fatal day came when she, in the act of helping me, was taken in an instant. Her last breath was a healthy breath. O! The awfulness of that moment, that hour, and the days to follow! Possibly I idealized her too much. I have said nobody ever had a better wife and no children ever had a better mother.



Perhaps I am getting ahead of my story. Although we were not blessed with much material property, we started farming and toiled and lived happily together. We had the best of neighbors and friends and were satisfied. Then something happened that has had an effect on my entire life. It was just another one of those things which we sometimes imagine cannot happen. On May 13, 1894, I was ordained to the ministry. My unworthiness and insignificance and sinfulness loomed up before me as never before. I first felt that something must have gone wrong. Had my dear wife felt as I did, I suppose it would have taken some effort to get me to go to church services at all. She, however, said she felt certain beforehand that I would be the one that would be chosen. So I accepted the call to the ministry as coming from the Lord and tried to adjust myself to my new calling. The fact that it was easy for me to memorize scripture, and that I had memorized many Bible verses in my younger years came to my assistance at this time.

Probably but few can remember the Cleveland depression of the early nineties. It was real hard to accumulate any property during this time, but by hard work and frugal living we managed to get along, but the chances of ever getting enough ahead in a material way to get a home of our own seemed very remote. In the spring of 1893 the immigration agent of the Great Northern Railroad came to Goshen, Indiana and met several of our brethren, including my cousin Ruben L. Bontreger.

He talked to them about the almost unlimited amount of free government land in the Northwest still awaiting settlers. He offered to take a number of our brethren to North Dakota free so that they could see for themselves what the country and the railroad had to offer to new settlers. When I heard of it, I said at once that I would go along, and soon a company of five brethren were ready to make the trip to the frontier of North Dakota. On June 5, 1893 we started on the trip. At Chicago we were met by Max Bass, the G. N. immigration agent, and he gave us a pass from Chicago to St. Paul, and from St. Paul as far west as Minot, No. Dak., good also on any branch line of the G. N. Ry.

We left Chicago on the Chicago Great Western R. R., that evening in company with Mr. Bass, arriving in St. Paul the next morning. The run was made in thirteen hours, which was considered a fast run at that time. That was fifty years ago. Now the run is made on some roads in just half that time.

It happened that on this day, June 6, 1893, St. Paul celebrated the completion of the Great Northern Ry. to the west coast. Max Bass, as a representative of the G. N. Ry., of course, wished to remain in the city for the celebration, and it was rather easy for him to persuade us to remain also. That evening we left for the Wild West. After looking the country over from the Red River Valley in Minnesota to the government lands as far west as Minot, we decided that No. Dak. offered us an opportunity to acquire homes for us and our families.

In the spring of 1894 four families were ready to move to this land of opportunities. We, however, did not see our way clear to go at that time, and about a month after they left I received my call to the ministry. It seemed the Lord was leading. We at least had prayed for and expected him to lead us in accordance with His will. It was no doubt His will that we remain another year to receive my call to the ministry before venturing to this new country and a new settlement. However, early the following winter especial efforts were made by the new colony and the Great Northern Ry. to get us to join the new colony. We did not feel able to make the costly move and have enough means left to start up in No. Dak. The Great Northern Ry. however, offered to take us, that is, the family and our immigrant car free to Bisbee, No. Dak. We felt that the Lord was definitely leading, and everything shaped itself for our move to No. Dak. with hardly any planning on our side.



My year's experience as a minister, although limited, was of much value to me in my calling as the only minister of a colony that was now composed of about twenty families from four different states and six or eight different localities. We were quite widely scattered and at first had meetings every four weeks. Although we came from different states and from different districts with different rules and regulations we got along well right from the start.

We all agreed to call on our old Bishop David S. Kaufman to come to our assistance in holding communion for us. We were fourteen miles from Bisbee, our nearest town, and twenty miles from the nearest town on the main line of the Great Northern Ry. We, however, willingly made the twenty miles to meet the bishop and his wife, and we all enjoyed their visit and his help in church matters.

We had to go fifteen miles for wood for fuel. We did not have the money to buy coal and those who did not have any money even to buy wood had about 30 or 35 miles to go to the timber on the Turtle Mountains to get their fuel. However, we all enjoyed pioneer life, and the fellowship and peaceful relations we had among ourselves.

Every spring a number of new immigrants added to our number, and we soon had a large congregation. In the fall of 1895 we again had Bishop Kaufman to help us, and as there was harmony among us and a desire for another minister, ordination services were held, and Eli D. Weirich was chosen by lot and ordained to the ministry. We had a good crop that first year, in fact the heaviest crop we had during our stay in No. Dak. However, the price was so low that it made but little more than was needed to pay the expenses. However, we had plenty of feed.

The Great Northern R. R. Co. very wisely figured that if the new settlers would return during the winter to their old homes for a visit it would relieve any homesickness that they might have and also give their friends a chance to make inquiries about their newly established homes in the Northwest. Therefore they offered free passes to Chicago and return to any one that wanted to go "back home." Several took advantage of the offer and we were among them, in fact we were urged by Mr. Bass to go. So we spent the winter of 1895 in Indiana.

Our first child was born November 6, 1891, a son, whom we named for his grandfather, John. The second, a daughter, was born July 26, 1893. We named her Mary for her maternal grandmother. On February 2, 1895, a son was born to us which we named Joseph. This was just two months before we started on our move to No. Dak. So we came to No. Dak. with three children. When we went back to Indiana in December, 1895, we took those three children along. Several weeks before we were ready to return to our new home our baby Joseph became sick with catarrh fever and died on March 4, 1896, aged 13 months and 2 days. Several weeks later we returned to our new home with heavy hearts because we had to leave one of our dear children in a cold grave in Indiana.

We returned to No. Dak. with a large number of new immigrants. The immigrants again had a special passenger train and several special freight trains, as a large number of families of the Church of the Brethren also moved to the Northwest. The spring of 1896 was quite wet, and it was late when the crops were finally all in the ground, but we reaped another good crop.

Winter came early in 1896. On the second day of November a dozen of us with as many teams and wagons went to the Turtle Mountains 35 miles distant for firewood. Dead timber and saplings on these hills were free to settlers. That night six inches of snow fell. It was rather hard wheeling, but we all brought our loads home the next



day. Our wagons were not used any more for the next five months. It turned cold at once, going down to 30 below zero several times during the month. That year on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, we had the worst blizzard we had at any time while we lived in the Northwest. Many settlers could not get to their stables at all. I managed to get out once during the day, and gave the stock some grain, but could not give them any hay or water.

It was about zero during the blizzard. The night that followed the wind was at its worst, and blew the roof off of a neighbor's house. The next morning it was about 25 below zero. As many new settlers had come in that year who were not supplied with sleds, and as winter came on so early the dealers could not supply the demand for sleds, we tried to get along with the sleds that were available. In early December four of us with four teams and two sleds went to the mountains for wood. The third day out we came home several hours after dark with a half dozen poles. We had broken both sleds. It was below zero all of these three days. That was about the toughest trip we made, but there were others that were somewhat similar.

We had a funeral in November of that year in that extreme cold weather. Finally March came and brought us another blizzard only slightly milder than that of November. In that November blizzard several settlers were caught away from home and froze to death about 15 miles from us. That spring on April 2 the special immigrant train was to arrive to Bisbee. We started to Bisbee with sleds, but soon saw that we would need the wagons and returned and got them. That was five months to the day when we first got sleighing for that winter. We had a lot of snow shoveling to do to get through, as the snow was now soft, and it was dark before we got to town. The train came sometime during that night. The next morning, being Sunday morning, we took the passengers and went home, leaving the stock for the following week.

We now had a series of dry years, when crops were light. On May 17, 1897, a son was born to us, which we named David. So now we again had three children. On February 7, 1898 we started on a trip to Kansas and Missouri, where we visited many cousins, uncles, and aunts. That year was a very dry year, and crops were very light, but we always managed to get along, never being without bread or the wherewithal to buy flour. The Lord always provided for us, and, although we experienced some hard times, we always had enough and were satisfied. I feel especially thankful for this and for the fact that every one of the colony was always ready to lend a helping hand whenever and wherever needed. We really all seemed like one big family. The tie that bound us together then was never severed in after years when most of us moved to other parts; we were always glad to meet anyone of our old North Dakota neighbors. We were friends and brothers and sisters wherever we met.

On November 30, 1898, we again made a visit to Indiana. I also made a trip to Gibson, Miss., in company with Manasses E. Bontrager and Jacob B. Bontrager. A colony had been founded there in Miss. several years before, and my brother Joseph was one of the colony. We returned to No. Dak. the middle of January. We butchered on January 19, my birthday, which was a most beautiful day. The next day it turned colder and the following nineteen days was the coldest spell we had while we were in No. Dak. The first really cold day it was 35 below zero, and for about five days it was just about the same, then it went lower and lower until it reached 52 below. It rose some after this until the twentieth day, when it went above zero. That seemed really mild.

When we left Indiana in January of that winter for home, my father and mother took us to White Pigeon, Michigan, where we boarded the train for home. There upon



the platform of the depot I gave my parents goodbye, and there and then was the last time I ever saw my dear mother.

On April 5, 1899, our son Manasseh was born. We now had four living children. However, in June of this year our children contracted the whooping cough and two, Mary and David also got a malarial fever. After a short illness they both died, Mary on June 11 at the age of 5 years, 10 months, and 16 days. David died on June 15 at the age of 2 years, 2 months, and 28 days. We felt deeply bereft, but knew that the Lord who had led us and protected us so far was not making a mistake now.

We would gladly have kept our dear children at that time, but since then and up to this time I feel real thankful to the Lord that he has taken them unto himself in their infancy and spared them the awful troublesome times that the younger generation that is destined to live, has to pass through. We now had two children left. John the oldest was seven years old, and Manasseh, the baby, was two months old. They are both living, and have their work, their problems, and their worries at the ages of 51 and 43 respectively. It seems such a short time ago when they were but small children. O! What changes the next forty years will bring.

The year 1899 was a fairly good year, and prices also were fair, and we accumulated some property from year to year. We filed on a homestead of 160 acres soon after our arrival in No. Dak. We broke up some of the prairie lands each year and raised some crops and occasionally had to do some breaking for others in order to get some ready cash to buy some necessities of life. We built a 14 x 18 house, 10 ft. high in the spring of 1896. We did not have to hire any help, as whenever anyone was putting up any kind of a building, the neighbors turned out and helped. We thus put up a sod stable, with poles and slough hay for a roof. We helped each other dig wells, and in every way we helped each other.

From the first year in No. Dak., I helped more or less to operate threshing machines. After the first few years I always put in full seasons until the year 1903. In that year I threshed but a few days. The year 1900 was a dry year, and the crops were light. Early in this year we got letters from our old home that my mother had consumption and that she was gradually failing, and one day in May we received the sad word that mother had died. Circumstances prevented me from visiting her in her illness or attending her funeral. So that last look that I had of her face was when she was standing on the White Pigeon depot platform in January, 1899.

In the year 1900 I had all of our homestead under cultivation except what we used for pasture, and I felt able to farm more land. As the 160 acres immediately west of our homestead was for sale at \$1600.00, we bought it and moved our house on that quarter and built a 16 x 24 addition to it.

We could have proved up on our homestead in five years after filing, and procured the deed for it, but since it was not taxable until after it was deeded, we let it go for seven years before proving up on it. Seven years was the limit. We now also built a frame barn on our newly acquired 160 acres, and we felt that the Lord had been good to us, as we now had 320 acres of good land with good serviceable buildings and the equipment to operate the farm.

One evening in the spring of 1901 a number of our brethren came to our house unannounced, and I was at a loss to know what it all meant. I began to fear that they might have some grievance to settle with me. However, when we were all seated in the house, they told the object of their call. They had talked the matter over and decided that the time was here to ordain a bishop in the church. It was necessary



to make arrangements beforehand so that there would be two bishops there for the ordination. It was so decided, as I could not remonstrate the idea. So it came to pass that besides our Bishop David S. Kaufman, my uncle Christian E. Bontrager of Hutchinson, Kansas, was also present at our communion services, where I was chosen by the church as bishop to serve the church in all its functions from that time on.

I felt my shortcomings and my unworthiness of assuming the responsibilities of such an office, but, of course, submitted. Bishop Kaufman said I would have it easier now than I had it before, and so it proved to be. The next day we started to drive through to Kenmare, N. Dak. a distance of 125 miles, to hold communion services for the colony at that place, and so it happened that just one week after being ordained bishop, I held communion services myself. The Lord had been good to me, and I felt that I could not do enough for Him. Now forty-two years later I still have many more reasons to feel thankful for the Lord's goodness and mercies which He has bestowed upon poor me. I wish I would have served Him better--wish I could serve Him better now.

In the fall of that year I baptized my first converts, one Simon Yoder being the first one. He was a son of Henry Yoders. That same fall Bishop Tobias Yoder of Oregon visited us at the time we had our communion, and so he held communion services for us.

During the winter of 1901 we made another trip to Indiana, visiting all the Amish settlements in the state except Adams county. We visited in Elkhart and Lagrange, Kosciusco, Marshall, Howard and Miami counties and Brown, Daviess, Martin, Newton, Jasper and Allan. The fall of 1902 was the last season that I put in threshing. I got \$5.50 per day which was the top wage for running separators at that time. Later on they paid much more than that. On December 21, 1902, our son Levi was born.

In 1903 an Amish colony was started at Glendive, Montana. Nearly all of these settlers came from our settlement in No. Dak. This colony and the one at Kenmare No. Dak., looked to me for help whenever needed. Under God's kind leading these colonies were privileged to enjoy unity and prosperity in a material way and also spiritually.

It seems that I ever had a kind of a roving disposition. I desired to see other countries. I sometimes got the idea that there may be other places where living conditions, or the climate might be more congenial than where we were living, and so I frequently took advantage of offered opportunities to see other parts of the country.

In January, 1901, two of our other brethren and I made a trip through western Canada. We went to Winnipeg, and from there west to Calgary, Alberta, and then north to Edmonton. South Edmonton was at that time the farthest north railroad point in America. We stopped a day and night at Red Deer and spent several days at Edmonton. We were driven by team and sleigh northwest of Edmonton about 15 miles, while the temperature was about 25 below zero. There we found people talking of going northwest to the Peace River country and to Athabasca Landing. I made the remark later that we had moved from Indiana 100 miles to the Northwest, now we were 100 miles farther northwest, and there people are still talking of going to the Northwest.



In November, 1901, we ordained Ruben L. Bontreger as deacon. In October, 1900, Bishop David S. Kaufman ordained Eli N. Hochstetler to the ministry, and several years before that Moses S. Miller was ordained. In November, 1902, we ordained Daniel Miller to the ministry. He, however, moved to Glendive, Montana, with the first bunch that went out there. In October, 1903, we ordained Rudy A. Yoder and a week later Moses M. Yoder. Some of the ministers had moved away so we had to ordain others in their stead.

In July, 1904, brother-in-law Fernandis Miller and I made a round trip through the South and West, returning by way of the Northern Pacific R. R. We visited three Amish colonies in Kansas, one at Hubbard, Oregon, and the one at Glendive, Montana. On October 29, 1906, our daughter Lydia was born, and on January 31, 1910, Katie was born. We now had five children living and three dead.

The novelty of farming these prairie lands, where several four- to six-horse teams were needed, wore off after a number of years and a desire for farming on a smaller scale grew more or less on some of us. The cheap cut-over lands of Northern Wisconsin appealed to me, and I made a trip there in the winter of 1906. Later three of us brethren and my wife made a trip to Radison, Wisconsin in June, 1907. The country and the climate appealed to us. We also extended our trip to Oscoda county, Michigan, and to our old home in Indiana, and visited for several weeks with friends, brothers and sisters, and with my sixty-nine year old father and stepmother. They had married but about a week before.

From that time on we were planning to move to Wisconsin, as soon as arrangements could be made. In 1909 several families made the move, but we did not go until the fall of 1910. The year 1909 was a good crop year, but 1910, our last year in No. Dak., we had the poorest crop of any year while we were in that state.

We were now ready to leave the land that enabled us to have a home of our own. We could look back with pleasure over the years that we had spent here so pleasantly, even though we had to go through some hardships. We remembered that here we had accumulated considerable means, a home free of debt with all the necessary equipment in stock and machinery to operate the farm. Besides it would be hard to bid adieu and leave our brethren and sisters whom we had learned to love, and with whom we had so peacefully lived for a number of years. We always got along well in the church, as we had a united ministry at all times.

However, we left the promise that I would expect to be with them at least twice a year to help them with communion, baptism, or any other matters that demanded my presence. During that summer of 1910 preceeding our move I made another trip to Wisconsin and bought a place of some 90 acres with log buildings and about four acres in cultivation.

In October we loaded our immigrant car. Our kind neighbors rather reluctantly helped us load. We also found kind neighbors to help us unload in Wisconsin and to move into the loghouse. Son John at the age of eighteen years went with the car. We at once made arrangements for building a substantial and rather commodious frame residence. We had plenty of help, and by December we were living in our new home. We had church services every two weeks. I was the only minister, except when we had visiting ministers. During the first winter we made plans to build a substantial barn 32 x 42 during the following summer. We also cleared some land every summer, so that by 1916 we had more than one hundred acres under the plow. In the meantime we had bought more land, so that our farm consisted of 204 acres.



In the summer of 1914 we added eighteen feet to the length of our barn and also built quite a roomy straw shed with a lean-to, and also erected a silo 12 x 30. Our dairy herd had increased to about ten cows and also quite a number of young cattle. We had again prospered by the grace of God materially and also got along well in the church, although there were a few minor problems that came up from time to time. We felt that the Lord had still favored us and were happy and contented in our Wisconsin home among the best and most congenial neighbors.

For several years prior to 1912, through correspondence, considerable interest had been worked up for launching a German church paper for the benefit of our people. The necessity for such a publication was keenly felt. That there would be considerable opposition was also well known to us. Finally in January, 1912, a meeting was called at the residence of Samuel D. Guengerich of Wellman, Iowa, to discuss the matter and, if thought advisable and practical, to organize for the venture. Under considerable pressure I finally consented to edit the paper. Some original matter had already been prepared, and with that in hand and accompanied by Bishop Jacob F. Swartzendruber, I left from there for Indiana with the idea that we present our plans to J. F. Funk of Elkhart and get from him further advice and instructions in the matter and to turn the manuscript over to him for further editing and publication. For about two years and a half I continued with the redaction of the paper, which at the suggestion of J. F. Funk was named Herold der Wahrheit as successor of the old, but at that time defunct H. der W.

It was a sixteen-page paper, one half German and half English. It was really pleasant work, and I enjoyed it, although it took many hours of work that I otherwise could have spent on the farm. After continuing for nearly two years and a half as editor, I felt that I could get another brother to take the task over. I know that many ridiculed the idea of having an Amish church paper with an Amish bishop as editor; but not once did anyone speak disparagingly to me about it, nor did I receive a written line of ridicule about our venture. However, at this time I felt that Bishop Jacob F. Swartzendruber of Kalona, Iowa, would take over the editorship, if a little pressure was applied. I applied the pressure, and I was released from this position of responsibility.

We had a most pleasant home in Wisconsin, with the buildings on the banks of one of the most beautiful lakes, of about 100 acres in extent. We had the best and kindest and most helpful neighbors imaginable. All in all, I still consider the six years we spent in northern Wisconsin the most congenial of my life.

John, the oldest son, having naturally a mechanical turn of mind, turned back to No. Dak. for the threshing season and finally went to Montana in search of land open for homesteading. He filed on a homestead and worked in the meantime for settlers near Glendive, Montana. When World War No. 1 broke out, he was, of course, subject to draft, but as he was an expert engineer by this time, and being aware of the fact, that by enlisting he could select his war job, he enlisted and finally spent more than a year in France with the A.E.F. as an engineer in a machine shop 100 miles south of Paris, where he never even heard a shot fired.

In the winter of 1915 we made an extended trip through the Southwest. We started just before Christmas and visited at Arthur, Ill., for the first time. We were there over the holidays and then spent several days at Shelbyville, Ill., where my dear wife had an uncle and a number of cousins. We also visited in Maize and Custer counties of Oklahoma. We found many old friends at these places and also in Sumner and Anderson counties in Kansas. We also visited in Johnson county, Iowa,



and had intended to stop in Buchanan county. However, we received a message from home while in Johnson that it was necessary for us to come home. We went at once, but found really no need for an immediate return.

Other conditions developed in our pleasant northern home that caused us some anxiety. Our boys were about grown to young manhood in 1916. They had pleasant surroundings and pleasant company. They had the privilege of attending Methodist Sunday School the year round, also frequent preaching services, which were held in our schoolhouse. As our colony was not large and with us living a little to one side of the main colony, their associates, both boys and girls, were mostly such that were not of our people, and largely with young people of families that had no church affiliations at all. We sensed danger ahead for our family. At this time, also, conditions in the old Indiana home church were changing. Although the church had two bishops, David S. Kaufman, who had been bishop here since 1877, was now 81 years old. Two years before, on May 31, 1914, he had ordained a bishop to take his place, but this bishop, Joseph E. Mast, was also old and really failing as much as Kaufman did. At this time a private appeal was made to us to move back to our old home church where I grew up, where I was baptized, where we married, and where I was needed now.

All these facts were factors in causing us to seriously consider moving back to Indiana whence we had left over twenty-one years before. Accordingly I made a trip to the old home in August, 1916, to talk matters over. I had to continue my trip to Defiance county, Ohio to see my folks. The result was that I bought the old farm on which I was born and had grown up. Father was now 78 years old and I was 48.

Although it was hard for us to leave North Dakota six years before, it was still harder to leave our many friends in Wisconsin. We rented our farm to a good neighbor with whom we also left a number of cows and young stock. We sold some implements and a horse. We took seven head of horses, but no cattle, along to Indiana. All our household goods and some farm implements were also loaded in our immigrant car. I was but 48 years old and decided to go with the car myself.

The neighbors helped load the car, and the next morning, after the stock was in the car, the "Scoot," a mixed train, came along and picked me up with the car. As the train pulled out we waved goodbye to each other as long as we could see each other, then I watched the town of Exeland disappear, and when the familiar places had all disappeared, I fell down on my face and cried like a child. The church, the brethren and sisters, the kind neighbors, the good country, the natural advantages of climate and land all drew like cords at my heart, and I felt that I was leaving the best and happiest part of my existence when leaving Exeland, Wisconsin.

Kind friends, however, were ready to help us unload our car and help us to move into our home. It was not very easy to again adjust ourselves to conditions here, as it was so much different in so many different ways from what we had been used to having in the newer countries of No. Dak. and northern Wisconsin. I had left Wisconsin with the promise to come out there whenever necessary at my own expense for at least several years. We had ordained a minister there several years before we left, so they were left again with one resident minister. On May 19, 1919, we also ordained Ira Nissley to the ministry there.



In 1917 mother and I took an extended trip through the east as far as Delaware and New York City. During the following winter we prepared for rebuilding the old barn. We rebuilt it and erected a new strawshed and a cement stave silo, and equipped all the stables with a litter carrier outfit. Our family relations at home had always been of the most pleasant kind. No quarreling or unkind words were heard in the family. I often thought that I was the most favored person because of these facts and felt that I could not feel thankful enough to my gracious heavenly Father for the many blessings he had bestowed upon us. We had also prospered in a material way. The Lord had blessed me vastly more than I was worthy. It was not because of wisdom or foresight of worthiness on my part that these blessings were showered upon me. It was the Grace of God only.

But this happy condition came to an end. On September 24, 1918, the fatal day came. The little girls were in school, and the boys were helping neighbors with their work. We had a cousin of my father's with us for dinner. After dinner I had a big load of clover seed to get out of the barn to take to a neighbor to get it hulled. We had to hitch the team to the rear end of the wagon to get it out of the barn. My dear wife, always ready to help me, at my suggestion came to drive the team, while I took the wagon tongue to steer the wagon out. For some reason she lost control of the team and they ran for the corner of the barn, drawing the load after them and catching her, my wife and mother of my children, between the load and the barn, crushing her life out of her in an instant. That was the darkest moment of my life. Changed in a moment from the happiest of families to the most unhappy.

The children were brought home before her dead body was taken to the house. To son John, who was in France, I wrote the sad news saying he had lost the best mother that anyone ever had, and I meant it. I suppose I bewailed my loss and my unworthiness and shortcomings towards mother and the children. In the next letter I received from him were these words which I prize more highly than any other recommendation I ever got from any source whatever. This came from my son--one who knew. He wrote: "You have been all that a just and godly man can be to his wife and children."

When we read the letter I said, how can he make such a strong statement, when one of the other boys said, "Why not--it is true." I felt very keenly my unworthiness of such a testimony, but it still was a real comfort for me to know that my children feel that way. The death of my dear life partner was an awful shock to me. I felt that I had nothing more to live for and expressed the wish that the years might pass as days, so that my dreary life would soon be over. However, the Grace of God is her blessed state. I recognized the grace of God in dealing with her as he did, as she did not have to live through a siege of sickness, or suffer for even a moment. She was well up to her last breath, and then instantly transferred to that better home above--a home so much better than any that I could give her here. These thoughts helped to tide me over these sorrowful days. Besides this, my dear children were, as I often said, just as good and kind to me as they possibly could be. I came to ponder over the sad circumstances others were in, when the mother of their little children passed away leaving them almost helpless. I remembered that my children were all old enough to take care of themselves. I appreciated the fact that we had had for two years a very good hired girl, and that she had agreed to remain with us for another year. So everything in the house and the home went on as before. The good Lord was still good to me.



We had now been in Indiana almost two years when I had to go through this awful experience. Within six months after returning from the Northwest I was called to different parts of different states to aid in church matters. Midland, Michigan, where there was a rather large settlement of our people at that time, was without a resident bishop. Council meetings and communion, weddings and minister ordinations, as well as church troubles, required assistance frequently. Other ministers and bishops made frequent trips to Midland, but I had a good share of these calls to make. I made five trips to Midland one year between July fourth and Christmas. I was also called to Arthur, Ill., and Daviess county, Indiana the first spring that we were here.

Two years later I was first called with others to Allen county, Indiana and was often called after that. possibly was there two dozen times and about as many times in Midland, Mich., and about a dozen times in Daviess county, Ind. From March, 1917, to this time I have been called to eleven different states, and made numerous trips to Bloomfield, Montana, before 1917. These calls came from 25 different localities; besides I have at different times been asked to help along in church matters in the neighboring districts. I have always felt my unworthiness to deal with matters of strife, and no doubt made many mistakes, and sometimes the load was most too heavy to bear, but the Lord was ever nigh and graciously helped through our struggles. I am, however, glad to be able to say that I have never been partial to anyone, whether bishop or minister or lay brother or sister. My conscience is clear in this matter. However, it was always pleasant to help other congregations in communion and in baptism or weddings. May the Lord overlook my many shortcomings in labors with other congregations as well as those at home. I am here just stating facts without boasting. There were several other bishops that were possibly called about as often as I to help in church matters, and Bishop Andrew Mast of Arthur, Ill., I think was called oftener. I tried to do my duty, but for some years I felt that because of my age and forgetfulness and being somewhat hard of hearing, I should decline and refuse to accept any more such calls.

This is now December 17, 1943. I finally accepted a call to Madison county, O., last June after trying for several months to be excused. Now I have again a call to come to Howard county, Ind., on such church business. I do not as yet know what I will do about it. When they plead as they again do in this call, it seems a rather serious matter to refuse.

I am, however, again getting ahead of my story. I can say this that during the time when these calls were most numerous, my affairs at home were such that I could leave home at about any time with the assurance that everything at home would be looked after as well as if I were there. With good hired girls to care for the home and two good boys to see to the outside work everything was well cared for. After getting along very well for a year after that fatal accident, our good hired girl did not want to remain longer, and so it was necessary to hire another girl to do the housework. This included the task of caring more or less for my good parents. Father was nearly 82, and my stepmother but a few years younger. It was not easy to find a girl that would be willing to undertake such a task. My brother Menno and wife agreed to rent the place and take care of our parents, and so I bought this 40 acre place across the road from the old place and moved on here in the fall on 1919. Menno's and we got along very well together and never had any trouble at all.



In the summer of 1921 we built a kitchen to our house and also a strawshed to the barn, and besides I was making trips to Michigan and Wisconsin and other places as usual. We also made a trip to North Dakota in June. Stepmother died while Menno's were on the old place in 1922. I find in looking through my diaries that during all these years I was making trips to Midland, to Nottawa, to Allen, Daviess, and once in a while to Arthur, Ill., also to Grantsville, Maryland, and to North Dakota, and, of course, once in a while to Oscoda county, Michigan.

In 1928 Menno's, because of the fact that they were short of help by this time, not wanting to operate the farm any longer, asked to be released, as they wished to move back on their own place. So my nephew John D. Miller, who had been ordained to the ministry some years before, asked to rent the place and care for father. We rented him the place. If we could not easily have found someone to take the place we would have moved thereon ourselves and cared for father the rest of his days. My circumstances were different by this time and we felt we could take care of him. I got ahead of my story again, so I will go back to 1920. It was plain in the spring of 1920 that I would have to get some other housekeeper again by fall, as my hired girl expected to remain only until October.

To my other troubles this one was added, and this problem, as all my others was taken to the throne of mercy. I asked the Lord for help and guidance. I remembered a thought and vision that rushed through my mind when my wife, Mattie, lay dead before me on that fatal day of September 24, 1918. My mind was active at that time, and amid the awful thought that I must go on without her, the thought also passed through my mind that possibly someone else would in time take her place, if I would do like others in like circumstances usually do. The thought seemed too awful to contemplate, but at that instant the features of the one to take her place passed before me. I had seen her but once since she was a little girl.

This thought and vision were, however, forgotten until the time came when I really needed a housekeeper; then this circumstance was recalled. It came no doubt in answer to my prayer and the Lord so led further that by means of correspondence we mutually agreed to enter into the state of matrimony the following winter. On December 5, 1920, we were married by Bishop Jacob Gascho in Oscoda county, Michigan at the residence of my dear wife's parents, Jacob C. Miller. Over 22 pleasant years have passed since then, and I am very grateful to the Lord's guidance in this matter. Marriage is sometimes said to be a lottery; if so, I have twice been very fortunate in this drawing.

In December 1919, we found it necessary to divide our North Barrens church district into two districts. Bishop Daniel J. Stutzman had moved into our district near Stone Lake shortly before, and he took charge of the west district. All went well at this time and my responsibilities had not been increased, rather decreased.

In the fall or winter of 1921 a certain bishop moved into the west district from the West, and Dan Stutzman moved to Nappanee, Ind. During this time the compulsory school laws seemed to become a serious question and caused much discussion and a number of meetings. In September, 1922, this bishop took it upon himself to decide a quite serious matter regarding high school attendance. His attitude was quite offensive to a number of bishops and ministers, as well as to other members, and after several largely attended meetings, he was silenced and further disciplined. For three long years I again had the two districts under my care. When he was again reinstated after a period of three years, his attitude in general was such that I felt that it would be quite a problem for me to get along in church matters with him in a neighboring district.



This circumstance, and the fact that I could never quite reconcile myself to the idea of living and farming again in an old established community like this, after having lived for more than 21 years in the newer countries of the Northwest, and the further fact that it began to look very much as if I would again be obliged to take over the editorship of the Herold der Wahrheit, induced me to look around again with the idea of again settling in some other newer part of the country.

Perhaps it was wrong for me to entertain such thoughts. Perhaps I did not entreat the Lord enough for guidance at the time. Perhaps I took the matter too much in my own hands. Anyway these fears and probably distrust on my part at that time, which were probably only imaginary, were the cause of much misery to me in the years that followed.

The venture of trying to get such a home was extremely costly to me and my family. We lost some thousands of dollars, and I lost my health through a nervous breakdown because of the worries that were constantly before me day and night for several years. For several years it seemed that we would lose everything, and for myself I could have born the loss, but the thought that my faithful family would be deprived of the estate which they had so faithfully helped to accumulate was almost more than I could bear. I never complained or talked to anyone about it; I just carried the burning worry all alone, and it finally got my nerves. However, a second land deal in the South was the means of getting into shape to save a good part of our property. Then also, being able to sell 80 acres of our holdings put us in shape to hold the rest of it. However, the misery that I went through for 2 or 3 years was perhaps more than anyone suspected. I lived through it, but feel the effects of it now.

In September, 1930, I began getting dizzy spells with more or less frequency. These lasted for nearly a year. Although I took chiropractic treatments for the last six months, these dizzy spells continued until August, 1931. I had 18 such spells and at last five spells in one week's time, and then they stopped. The last spell that I had was the most severe that I had in all that time. What caused them to stop then I do not know. I had low blood pressure all this time, but while taking treatments it increased some. It was 95 when I first had it taken and is but about 110 since. My last dizzy spell, however, left my left ear buzzing all the time, and since then there is "something wrong with my head," perhaps not in the sense in which this expression is usually used. I do not have headache, but an almost continual queer sensation in my head, which increases with hard work or heavy lifting. My left ear is ringing now continually for more than twelve years. This is a constant reminder of my nervous breakdown after my heavy loss of 15 years ago, which worried me to an almost unbearable degree. I lived through it and that was about all, although probably no one suspected the misery I went through at that time.

On May 1, 1931, the large old house on the old place burned down together with the smaller house in which our parents lived in their later years. I was at that time making three trips a week to Goshen taking treatments. One of our good neighbors took over the task of supervising the rebuilding of the house, and with the willing assistance of our many good neighbors and friends, far and near, a new house was erected, painted, and finished with eave troughs and all in five weeks.

I have again gotten ahead of my story. I had two dizzy spells in the fall of 1930, before my father's birthday. On his ninety-third birthday, October 9, 1929, us children visited him. He was still able to take care of himself, but we felt



constrained to take some precautions, as we did not consider it safe for him to carry oil lamps around in the house. However this was not necessary as about ten days later he took to his bed, and after an illness of a little over three weeks, he died on November 11, 1930, aged 93 years, 1 month, and 2 days. He was not very weak at any time and was able to stand on his feet less than three hours before his death. The boys of one of our neighbors figured out his age in days and found that by giving proper allowance for all leap year days, etc., he had lived exactly 34000 days.

He is gone, but not forgotten, Often, now since he is gone, I can see where I could have honored him more and made his later years more comfortable, but now it is too late. Often also I would ask him questions about matters that he knew, and would be interesting for us to know, but it is too late to ask. He is no doubt resting with his Saviour, whom he served faithfully so many years. He was an old man, but I am now at the age where I used to think of him as an old man when he was at my present age.

In April, 1917, this country entered World War No. 1 after it had been raging in Europe for several years. I would, of course, have been an easy matter to remain out of it, but it seems most every president has an ambition to be a war president and Mr. Wilson was no exception. He finally got the stage set to a point where Germany committed the act that caused him to think the public would justify him in declaring war on Germany.

Conscription was soon in operation, and from the start I was called upon to help fill out questionnaires. Extra statements had to be made out in many cases. I was in the courthouse in Lagrange several days, with the aid of attorney Frank Dunton, helping boys with their questionnaires and statements asking for deferments. In 1918 I also visited the boys in several camps. I made two trips to Camp Taylor at Louisville, Ky., two to Camp Custer at Battle Creek, Mich., and one to Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio.

On the evening of September 23, 1918, a brother from near Lagrange came to us with his son and his questionnaire, and I helped them, and late that evening they left. Before we retired my dear wife said, we have here several watermelons, we will eat them this evening as we do not know how soon we will all be together again. That was the last evening that we ever were together, as she was so very suddenly taken from us the next day in that fatal accident.

I also made one trip to Hayward, Wisconsin, with one of the registrants, and presented his case before the local board at that place, with a written petition and also orally. The result was that he was deferred and allowed to continue working for his uncle, and during the next winter he married. World War No. 1 cost us many worries and many hours of time.

The school question immediately after the war also caused us much annoyance. Our people in general did not want to submit to the new law that youths under sixteen years of age should attend high school, after passing the common eight grades. We had numerous meetings, and I made a number of trips to Lagrange, and, in company with Bishop Nathaniel P. Miller and old Daniel H. Mast, I made two trips to Indianapolis. However, our efforts, in the main, were unsuccessful, and our children are taking higher grade studies until sixteen years old, when they were out of school.

Before our return to Indiana, the Old Order Amish churches of Indiana and Michigan had organized to help each other systematically in case of loss by fire or storm, etc. This was working quite satisfactorily. However, since more and more of



our people were borrowing money on farm mortgages, and since the Federal Land Banks had been brought into existence with the object of financing such borrowers, these lenders and loan companies demanded that the buildings on such financed farms be adequately insured. They recognized our insurance as sound and safe, but they demanded that a printed policy accompany each application for a loan.

Recognizing the necessity of reducing our mode of insurance with its rules and bylaws in writing, I proceeded to write it out plainly and as briefly as possible, and at a meeting that was called at that time, I presented a copy of this write-up. It was accepted. I then made a trip to Louisville, Kentucky, to present it to the head officials of the Federal Land Bank for their approval. They agreed to accept it in lieu of having our property insured in the regular old line insurance companies. They suggested a few minor changes and additions which were acceptable to us and so we proceeded to get this agreement printed under the name "Amish Aid Plan," and I made a second trip to Louisville when final arrangements were made, and, since that time, our insurance is accepted as very satisfactory, not only by the Federal Land Bank, but also by other banks and loaning agencies.

When World War No. 2 broke out in September, 1939, it was very plain to me that our President was sure to bring the United States into the conflict, notwithstanding his claims and statements to the contrary. Even when he plead for a third term and got his conscription bill passed, the general public still seemed to believe that he was sincere in his claim that he would keep the U.S. out of the war. Even his Lend-Lease bill failed to open the eyes of the people to see his real aims. However, some Mennonites sensed danger ahead, and planned a trip to Washington, D. C., in January, 1940, to see the President and the Attorney General and a few other officials to work out a plan whereby our conscientious objectors would not be obliged to enter the military training camps when conscripted. I was invited to accompany this delegation to Washington. I accepted the call. There were about eighteen of us from different groups of Mennonites, from the Church of the Brethren, and from the Quakers. The outline of the plan for separate camps for the C.O.'s was presented at that time practically the same as worked out later and in operation at this time.

In December, 1941, we were on a trip East and happened to be visiting at the home of a nephew of mine on the evening of December 6, when I got hold of a daily paper of that date. In that paper I noticed that the negotiations between the President and the special agent of the Japanese government, whom that government had sent to Washington to negotiate with the President for an understanding on the disputed points, had come to an end, with the President not giving in a particle on any point. I said there and then that we are in war with Japan directly. The next evening, Dec. 7, the radio announced the declaration of war by Japan. The President and the papers, and nearly everybody else seemed to be surprised and called it a treacherous attack, while possibly a few others besides myself knew it was coming. Roosevelt insisted on several points that really were of no concern to this country which he could easily have granted, and which would, no doubt, have averted the war. Conscription was going on for about six months before this country was in a declared war.

I was chosen as a member of the Mennonite Central Committee and invited to attend a meeting at Ephrate, Pa., before I knew that I was considered a member of the M.C.C. I was also chosen as a member of the Advisory Committee for the Bluffton,



Ind., C.P.S. camp, without being consulted about it. This camp was later moved to Medaryville, Ind. I attended a number of meetings in Goshen, in Chicago, and several in Lancaster county, Pa.

In October 1942 Ira Nissley and I were appointed by the M.C.C. to visit all the C.P.S. camps where any of our O.O. Amish boys were, and visit the boys, council with them, find out their needs if they have any, and minister to them in any way that may be necessary. We started on our mission at once and visited all the camps in the east. Ira had his wife along on this trip but I was alone. This was in November, 1942. During the holiday season we visited the camps at Denison, Ia.; Weeping Water, Neb.; and Medaryville, Ind.

We had now up to January 1, 1942, visited 9 camps. We had decided that as soon as we could arrange it we would also visit all the western camps where any of our boys were staying. So on Saturday, January 16, wife and I went to Kalon, Iowa. Enroute in Chicago we stopped in the Rock Island City Ticket Office and bought four tickets to San Francisco and return. I had us routed by way of Omaha, Neb., and Billings, Mont., thence Great Northern to Portland, Oregon, and Southern Pacific to destination. Returning by way of Southern Pacific to Los Angeles, Union Pacific to Denver via Salt Lake City and Cheyenne, Wyoming, Santa Fe to Kansas City, and Rock Island to Chicago. The tickets cost \$78.65 each, and the combined length of the four tickets was over seven yards.

We stopped over Sunday at Kalona, Iowa, attending church services. Early on Monday morning we, that is, Ira Nissley and wife and Amanda and I, left Iowa City, while it was below zero, and started on our long trip. We arrived at Hill City, S. Dak., on Tuesday, January 19, my 75th birthday. We remained two nights, having meetings for the boys each evening and communion the last evening. Here, and when leaving at Edgemont, So. Dak., we experienced the greatest sudden changes in temperature that I ever heard of. At the camp, 15 miles from Hill City and 1000 feet higher, it was 15 above zero, while at the town it was 10 below at the same time. At Edgemont on that Friday morning we saw it change from 8 above zero to 48 above in one hour's time. We were told of other changes just as sudden and as great.

On Sunday we visited with the Hutterian Brethren at Lewistown, Montana. On Sunday night we resumed our journey amid late trains and 20 below weather, finally arriving at Belton, Mont., camp on a train that was twenty-four and one-half hours late. The following Sunday we spent with the brotherhood of McMinnville, Oregon. We spent four days there. Lapine, Ore., was the next camp. We also gave the boys communion there, and did the same at all the other camps in the West except the Colorado camps.

We spent a day in San Francisco and then went on to Fresno, California. There we were met by the boys from the North Fork camp, where we also stayed two days. At Los Angeles we visited over night with some of Amanda's old friends. At Salt Lake City we spent a day and then went on to Downey camp at Downey, Idaho, where we spent three days, and then went on to Ft. Collins camp and to the Colorado Springs camp. We then spent several days visiting in Reno county, Kansas, and several at Thomas, Oklahoma, and then we came on home. We were gone six weeks on this trip and made nearly 7500 miles by rail and 575 miles by bus and automobile. We did not visit the Terry, Mont. camp on this trip, as it had just opened when we started on the trip. So Ira and I made a special trip to Terry the latter part of March to visit this camp.



I have traveled considerably in my time and have for some years thought that my traveling would likely be very little during the rest of my lifetime. However, I was mistaken in this, as I traveled many more miles in the five months from Nov. 1, 1942, to April 1, 1943, than ever before in that length of time--more than 16000 miles--over 14500 by rail, and more than 1500 by automobile and bus--and was in 35 different states.

Wife and I have made a number of trips, visiting a number of our churches in different states. I have also made a number of trips alone. In January, 1935, after going to Louisville, Ky., to see Federal Land Bank officials about our insurance, I went on a trip to Florida, visiting our old Wisconsin neighbor's boy, Tom Etters, and family at Wabasso, and also visited over a weekend at Sarasota, Florida. I expected then that wife and I would spend a winter in Florida soon, but we never yet got to go. In 1931 Abe Gingerich, bishop at Wolford, No. Dak., died, and from that time on I had to help the church there again until 1938, when I thought they should be able to get along without outside help, as I had ordained Mahlon Yoder as bishop three years before. During that time I also ministered to the small colony at Rogers, No. Dak.

In 1935 several families moved to McMinnville, Oregon. The Great Northern Ry. had been instrumental in bringing this move about, and asked me to minister to the colony. I had been personally acquainted with the Agricultural Agent of the Great Northern, E. C. Leedy, since 1895, and when passing through St. Paul I frequently called at his office. When I called on him in 1935 he asked me to minister to this colony and gave me an annual pass good on all lines of the Great Northern Ry. to enable me to make any necessary trips at any time to this new colony, when their needs demanded it.

From that time on I made at least two trips a year to this colony in Oregon, and held communion for them twice every year. In 1939 wife Amanda and Andy S. Schrock and wife and Fernandis Miller accompanied me, and at that time bishop Jacob H. Miller of Hutchinson, Kansas was also there, and we ordained Moses W. Yoder as bishop at that time. We then continued our trip to California, Oklahoma, Kansas and Iowa.

During the winter of 1937 the Hutterian Brethren at Lewistown, Montana, were in severe financial straits, and they made an appeal for aid to some Lancaster county, Pa., Old Order Amish, especially to Jonathan B. Fisher. The appeal was published in the Herold der Wahrheit, and seemed to find a ready response with the editor, Levi A. Miller, and the readers. However, everybody seemed to feel that their actual conditions should be investigated and reported, so that the people would know if they are really deserving of our pity and financial aid. It was proposed that someone go and visit the colony and investigate their circumstances personally.

As it was known that I, at that time, carried an annual pass on the Great Northern Ry., it was proposed that I make the trip, as the expenses would be much less for me than others who had to pay full fare. I accepted, and as the time was short, I wrote to J. W. Tschetter in Chicago, a Russian Mennonite of the Mennonite Brueder Gemeinde, also a preacher, to get a pass for me from Chicago to St. Paul and return, which he kindly did for me. So there was no rail fare to pay beyond Chicago. I went at once and remained with them for two days.

I first called on their banker in Lewistown and got what information he could give me. He then had one of their employees to take me to the colony. After getting all the facts of their circumstances, and how they came into the straits they were in

now, from their leader Joseph Stahl, I found that his statements and those of the bankers were in perfect accord, and so I wrote a statement giving my findings of their conditions in full, and had it published in the Herold der Wahrheit and also in the Budget.

The statement was accepted, the necessary aid was forthcoming, and the Hutterites were relieved. I have visited the Hutterites a number of times since and find that they are now again prospering and have paid for their property, which was at that time subject to mortgage foreclosure.

In 1936 wife and I made an extended trip to Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, and Maryland. We were gone only about three weeks and were not satisfied with our stay in Lancaster county, Pa., and planned to make another trip soon. In September, 1941, we made the trip, stopping a day in Holmes county, O., attending the wedding of Joe J. Wingard and Nora Schrock. My brother Joe and wife accompanied us on this trip, and we greatly enjoyed it. We attended many meetings, four of which were baptismal services, where we baptized 48 young souls.

In 1926 we had also made a trip to Kansas and Oklahoma and as far west as Manitou, Colorado, where we spent several days in the mountains. In the summer of 1927 we also visited my brother John and family near Buffalo, N.Y., and also son John and family at Belleville, Pa. We also stopped over Sunday in Stark county, O. In my camp visitation work in the East in Nov., 1942, wife Amanda did not accompany me. I had been called to a meeting at Akron, Pa., and one in Lancaster. On that trip I left home on Sunday evening, Nov. 1, 1942, and, as I had long desired to see the New England states, I went on to Boston, Mass., and in the evening went on to Augusta, Maine, where I stayed in a hotel on Monday night. Tuesday morning I left in a rain and returned to Boston, Mass., and in the evening went on to New York City and to Philadelphia and Lancaster, where I arrived early on Wednesday morning. I had now been in or crossed every New England state. So up to this time I have been in every state in the Union and in 30 state capitals. Also in five provinces of Canada and in Mexico.

On our western camp visitation trip in January and February, Ira Nissley and wife and Amanda and I traveled together, and besides visiting the camps, we also visited at Kalona, Iowa, McMinnville, Ore., Thomas, Okla., and Hutchinson, Kansas.

In July, 1943, Ira Nissley and I were again appointed to visit all the O.O. Amish boys in camps and on detached service on farms or in hospitals at least twice a year. Perhaps I should have declined, but as the Lord has preserved my life and health up to this time, I felt that as long as I am able I should give my services wherever demanded for the good of others.

I do not feel able to carry out these duties as it should be done. I am afraid sometimes that I am not spiritual enough myself to inspire other young men to higher ideals. However, we are learning from the boys and I think the boys are learning some from us, so that we can disseminate some worthwhile ideas by exchanging views and seeing the problems the boys as well as we have to face. I am also well aware of the fact that there are not many of our ministers that are willing to undertake the task, and also know that not very many are suited for the work. So I suppose as long as the Lord so leads, I will try to do my duty as I see it.



My children from early childhood have shown due respect towards us as parents. They had always respected my views and my teachings, with a few exceptions. My advice was usually accepted. My plans of procedure in our work were usually carried out. It seemed they had confidence in my council. Even when some of them did not follow my advice, they did not answer or carry on in a disrespectful way. When we moved to Wisconsin from No. Dak., John, the oldest, was about 19 years old and had not yet become a member of the church; so during the summer of 1912, when he wished to return to No. Dak. to work and join the church, we willingly gave our consent. That fall wife and I and our two little girls went to No. Dak. where I again held baptismal services for the brotherhood there, and also council meeting and communion. So John was baptized by me at that time, although he rather reluctantly submitted. He said he could not agree to the way some of the admonishment and interpretation of scripture was presented by the ministers during the summer while under instruction. He was not present at the council meeting and communion immediately following baptism. We were sorely troubled, worried and grieved. John told his mother afterwards, that he could very well give in to the church, if the members were all like we were, but to express himself in agreement, and conform to the ideas of some of our members, of whom he named several, he said he could not. He was not disrespectful towards us and in a way we respected him for being conscientious in the matter.

He was at home the following winter for awhile, and part of the winter he secured work in the western part of the state. He also attended an advanced school at Austin, Minn., where among other studies he took up mechanics, and took a thorough course in steam and gas engineering, and passed as an expert in that line.

Soon after that he went to Montana, where he filed on a 320 acre homestead some 40 miles north of Miles City, and worked on a farm near Bloomfield, operating tractors most of the time. When this country entered World War No. 1 in 1917, and conscription started, he was a resident of Montana, and as such he realized that they would get him sooner or later for the army. Not knowing how objectors to war would be dealt with, and possibly not having been indoctrinated with the doctrine of non-resistance as he should have been, he enlisted for service in the armed forces of the nation. He was informed of the fact that by enlisting and volunteering his services, he could list his choice of service, and so enlisted as a mechanical engineer, and as such was assigned to the engineering department of the A.E.F.

His main training took place in Texas. Later he was sent to Long Island, N.Y., and from there he got a few days furlough to return home for a short visit with us before going overseas. A delay in getting started cut his stay still shorter. We, by this time lived in Indiana, and here he saw his dear mother for the last time on this earth. He was soon sent across and served in a machine shop 100 miles south of Paris, where he never heard a shot fired. However, he was serving in the war program, and was a part of the war machine.

I was instrumental in baptizing all my children, and also served in their marriage ceremonies, except at John's wedding. He was married by a Mennonite minister, as he was by this time a member of the Mennonite Church. However, I was also present at his wedding at Surrey, N. Dak. The other children all married at, or near our home here in Indiana. They all married in our Old Order Amish faith, but later Levi, with his family transferred his membership to the Conservative Amish. Still later Katie and Manasseh with their families joined the Mennonites.

It caused sadness on our part to see that the children did not choose to remain in the church of our choice, and especially since we notice the trend of the churches, especially the Mennonites, since they are fostering higher education, which gets away with a large number of them into higher criticism, weakening the Christian faith. However, I felt that the children meant to remain faithful to their Christ, and to engage in more active Christian activities in which we of the O. O. Amish faith are somewhat lacking. They were respectful to us about it, and I realize that they did not mean to dishonor me as their father in the step they have taken. I, however, could not help but feel that my usefulness in the church and churches and as a laborer in the C.P.S. program among our conscientious objectors was very much weakened by the fact that I could not hold my own children in the church in which I lived and labored, and which, I believe, has a mission and testimony to render in these dark times. I, however, wish them well and respect them for the respect they show toward us as their parents. They are kind to us and, I believe, would do almost anything for us. They respect and honor their stepmother, probably just as much as they would their own mother.

Besides John's, who have never lived near us since he is married, Lydia also moved away, after they were married for several years. As she married Jacob Stoltzfus, whose parents lived in Oscoda county, Michigan, his thoughts were rather drawn towards the land of his childhood, and as they were able to buy a home there cheaper than here, they moved there in 1929. So they also live 300 miles from us. They visit us occasionally, but not as often as we would like. It seems also we are not able to visit them as often as we would like to do.

We like to have all our children and grandchildren visit us often, and it seems they like to come home for a visit with us, too. I have mentioned that my children always showed due respect for me, or us as their parents, but there is another thing that I wish to mention. I have never heard any of my children use bad language, have never heard one of them utter a profane or obscene word. I feel very grateful because of the fact that I can make such a statement. I have seen so many boys utter vulgar and profane or obscene words right in the presence of their parents, that I feel especially favored and honored in being able to make such a statement. May the Lord bless them. I am also grateful because of the fact that none of the boys use tobacco in any form, and I do not know if they all know even the taste of liquor, at least they do not use, or rather misuse it.

Another matter for which I feel very grateful is the fact that I always have had such co-ministers that I could get along with. I have had many, no doubt many more than most bishops have to labor with--seven different ones while living in No. Dak., two in Wisconsin, and a dozen here in Indiana.

In North Dakota we had much trouble with a certain unruly brother for several years. He tried his best to work up disunity among us ministers, but failed. We always worked in unity and were agreed among ourselves. We could do nothing with him, and we had the full confidence of the church at all times. It was finally suggested, and we ministers agreed to it, that it might be well to call two bishops to see if they could do something with him. The church was agreed, so we called on our old Bishop David S. Kaufman again and Bishop Joseph Witmer of Daviess county, Ind. We had council meeting and communion while the call was pending, as there was no disunity or trouble in the church, so there was nothing to hinder us from holding communion as had been announced.



We were perfectly willing to let them have their way with the brother and he was reinstated, and were his best friends again. It seems there are often some ministers that like to oppose their bishops, and I have had a few of them, but never had any trouble with them. I have seen very much church trouble of all kinds, but I am thankful to my Lord that I have been spared such conditions at home. With grateful humility I can say that in the 43 years since I am bishop, the Lord has always helped us so that we have never failed having communion twice each year and have never seen the necessity of calling to our assistance any outside help because of any church trouble. This is true of our home church wherever we have resided, and also such other districts that were under my supervision, or assigned to my care.

It was necessary to ordain five ministers in our two East Barrens districts in the last five years and the good Lord has given us five servants that I trust will prove to be a real blessing to the church. It is a real pleasure to work with them. May the Lord continue to be with us and bless us as we continue to labor in His vineyard. May His name be praised, and may I ever remain humble and lowly in His sight.

I have up to this time (May 16, 1944) baptized 366 persons and married 149 couples, have preached 2418 times, preached the main sermon in church services 1343 times, 226 of which were communion sermons, preached 118 funeral sermons, opening services in church service and funerals 684 times, and sermonized on the Old Testament Patriarchs at communion services 50 times. I have ordained 30 ministers and 11 bishops and was present and helped at many more ordinations of ministers and bishops.

I have traveled by railroads up to this time 372549 miles and 38423 by auto and bus. I have, of course, made many more miles on autos and buses around home, going to towns, etc., but the above is figuring the miles made on trips. Of course, very much the large part of my railway travel was either on passes, or else my fare was paid by those for whom I made the trips.

It would, indeed, be more pleasant now if I could be more free of any temporal obligations and duties than I am. We are still farming, and although I do not carry on the actual farming operations, I still am continually busy on necessary work of making repairs on buildings, fences, ditches, etc., and making firewood and such handwork on the farm. Edwin has been subject to draft for a year now, but he has been deferred for work on the farm. This winter, however, they have tightened up on deferments and we have been obliged to rent addition land in order to keep him on the farm and out of camp. This means that I also have more to do and to look after.

I, however, feel grateful because of the fact I am able to work and really feel good, although my health is far from perfect. My blood pressure is very low, less than 100, but I do not notice the effects of it, except that I have a peculiar sensation in my head, especially when lifting too heavy, or working too long or too hard. I must also avoid work that requires stooping over, as that goes to my head too. If I have any heart trouble, I have never felt the effects of it.

Since my health was not of the best, and I ought not work hard all the time, and also since fences and ditches, as well as some buildings, were badly in need of repair work, which I was not able to do, in the winter of 1941 I decided that I would better dispose of the old home farm, pay off mortgages and stop interest payments. I finally sold the place to Jacob S. Schrock of Kansas. The price was not what it should have been, but I also realized that the farm is not ideal, and that I could not expect to get what most farms sold for.



As the war went on prices of real estate rose with other prices, and if I had waited, I might have realized considerably more for the farm. Besides this fact, I now also realize that Edwin could operate a good part or all of the old place if we still had it, and he needs more land to farm for deferment from C.P.S. service. I likely made another mistake in selling when I did. I have made many mistakes, the results of which my family must reap.

During the summer of 1944, duty again called me to visit the C.P.S. camps in the West. As I had called at the Medaryville camp several times during the winter and spring, I left that camp out of my itinerary for western camp visitation. I left home on Friday, July 28, 1944. I stopped over the weekend at Hutchinson, Kansas. Monday evening, after holding church services, I, in company with Preacher Sam N. Beachy and wife and Menno Schrock and wife of Arthur, Ill., left for the camp near Colorado Springs, Colo. From there I made a side trip alone to the Ft. Collins camp, and returning I met the others at Colorado Springs and together we went to the Provo Mental Hospital at Provo, Utah. My travel companions remained here over the weekend while I went on to the Downey, Idaho, camp, and spent the weekend there. We again met at Salt Lake City and went on to the California camps at Three Rivers and North Fork. After spending the weekend at North Fork we went on to San Francisco and Portland, Oregon. We spent two days and three nights with our brethren and sisters at McMinnville, Ore.

Here I left my pleasant travel companions and proceeded alone to visit the camps in Montana, South Dakota, and at Denison, Iowa. From here I left for my home on August 30, 1944, arriving on the 31st. I was gone one night less than five weeks and traveled over 7300 miles by rail and many miles by bus and autos and trucks. I spent 11 nights on trains in day coaches.

A busy time awaited me at home. We remodeled the stables in the barn, and soon corn cutting and making soy bean hay was at hand. I, however, made a trip to Oscoda county, Michigan, where I baptized the first of my grandchildren, Eli Stoltzfus.

In November I made an eight day trip to eastern Pennsylvania, visiting ten of our Amish boys on dairy farms in York and Lancaster counties. I also visited our boys at two mental hospitals and attended two weddings in Lancaster county. On returning, I had two weddings to attend in less than a week.

I still had five camps and four hospitals to visit in the East and planned to leave after the weekend of December 3. I attended our home church services on that day, and in the afternoon, after plans had been made to leave on an evening train for Harrisburg, word came to me that my old friend, brother and fellow minister, John L. Fisher of Bird-In-Hand, Pa., had died that forenoon. The funeral was to be on Wednesday. I, of course, planned to attend the funeral and was also expected to attend, as Johnny had asked me some years before to preach his funeral sermon, if he should die before I did.

At eight o'clock that evening Fernandis Miller and I left Goshen for Lancaster, stopping over at Harrisburg and calling on our Amish boys at the hospital on Monday night. Tuesday morning we went on to Lancaster and Bird-In-Hand. On Wednesday forenoon we attended Johnny's funeral and followed his remains to the grave. It seemed hard to realize that my old friend, whom I first met over 54 years before, and whom I left just two weeks before, apparently in good health, was now gone to his eternal home, and his mortal remains rested in his cold grave.



I accepted an invitation to a wedding the next day, where Johnny K. Stoltzfus, a campee from the Boonsboro camp, and Betty Beiler were married. That afternoon I accompanied some friends to Lancaster and left for the Powellsville, Md., camp. I went by way of Philadelphia and passed through the length of the state of Delaware. At Powellsville I had preaching services with about twenty of our boys and a large number of Mennonites. My brother Levi of Greenwood, Delaware, having been informed of my presence at camp, also attended.

After visiting with the boys awhile, I accompanied Levi to his home, and the next day, Saturday, Dec. 9, after calling on some old friends and a cousin of mine, Mrs. Cal Hershberger, he took me to Dover, where I attended meeting the next day. On Monday morning I left for Greystone hospital, near Morristown, New Jersey. I had preaching services with them and left the next day for Norristown, Pa., hospital. I had services there that evening and the next day went to Harrisburg and to the hospital over night.

Then I went on to the Boonsboro All-Amish camp and to Clearspring and then to the Luray and Grottoes camps. On Monday morning I went to the Staunton, Va., hospital and the following morning I left for Fincastle to look up some more records of the Andrew Borndrager family. From there I left for home, arriving on Wednesday night. Dec. 28 and 29 I attended the annual meeting of the Mennonite Central Committee in Chicago. On January 9, 1945, I went to Madison county, Ohio, because of some church trouble there. On Wednesday evening, January 31, we with some others visited the Medaryville camp.

Since some of the western camps had not been visited by us since my trip last August, it fell to my lot to visit Hill City and the Terry camp, and so I also included Belton, Montana, and Malcolm, Nebraska, on this trip. This trip was made during the first half of March, 1945. I also attended a Chicago M.C.C. executive committee meeting on March 24. In May I visited the Medaryville camp twice and also answered a call to Madison county, O., on May 28. In the forepart of June I called on our O. O. Amish boys in Michigan on dairy farms and in hospitals. I also attended another Committee meeting in Chicago on Saturday of the same week.

On Friday evening, June 29, I was kicked by a horse, got a rib cracked--the first time I ever had a bone broken. After two weeks I was still quite sore. From July 31 to August 11, 1945, I made another trip to the East, visiting Old Order boys on dairy farms and in hospitals as far east as Providence, Rhode Island.

On September 6 the wedding of Edwin and Anna Yoder was held here at our home. They had a large wedding, and a very warm day. They received many valuable gifts on their wedding day. Because of Edwin getting ready for the wedding, I felt obliged to keep the plow going. I probably did more plowing during these few weeks than I had done for ten years, but I could do it real well, although the ground was dry and hard. I also worked quite hard mowing soy beans and putting up the soy bean hay. I, however, could do it real well and felt good all this while.

From October 30 to November 17 I again made a business trip to the East, calling on our Old Order boys on farms, in hospitals, and in camps. The camps at Luray and Grottoes were filled up recently, as many were sent East after the fire season closed in the West. On this trip I contracted a cold and felt quite sick and grippy the last ten days.



As I had been named in March, 1945, as a member of the delegation that was to present the all Mennonite attitude toward the proposed Universal Military Training Bill which was to be introduced to Congress in the near future, I accompanied the six-man delegation to the House Office Building in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 2, 1945. The committee did not give their decision on the disposition of the conscientious objector to war in case the bill becomes a law, but said they would give it later.

After visiting the office of Representative in Congress Gillie of Ft. Wayne, and of Senator Willis of Angola, and ex-Senator Jamieson in his law office in the Southern Building, and also the galleries of the Senate and House of Representatives, I called at four of the eastern hospitals where some of our young men are employed as attendants.

I also attended church services in Lancaster county at Bennie Fisher's. After the meeting I, with others, called on the aged brother John Beiler. He was in good health at the age of 93. His mind was clear, his hearing very fair and his eyesight good enough so that he was able to work at his cabinet maker trade without glasses. His hair had barely started turning gray. A week later I received word that four days after my visit with him he was found dead, kneeling at the side of his bed. He had not been sick, but complained of not feeling so good the last few days.

We had been planning for ten years to spend part of a winter in Florida, so when our son Manasseh and wife planned to go and invited us to accompany them we became interested. However, I felt it was my duty to visit the western C.P.S. camps, so we decided that Amanda would go with them to Florida, while I would visit camps. They left on January 2, 1946, per car and house trailer. I left the next day, Jan. 3, for the Northwest. I visited at Malcolm, Nebraska, Jan. 4 and spent the weekend at the Hill City, So. Dakota, camp. On Monday forenoon I again visited the big dam, which was built entirely by the C.O. boys. They worked without any pay at all and now had it very nearly finished. I left in the afternoon for the Belton, Montana camp, arriving there in the evening of Jan. 9 and found but one of our O.O. Amish boys there.

I arrived at McMinnville, Oregon, Friday evening and spent the weekend there with the brotherhood. Had services on Sunday at the home of bishop Moses Yoder, while he was away on a visit in Iowa. I spent Tuesday night, Jan. 15, in San Francisco and Wednesday night at the North Fork camp. While here I received the sad news that our neighbor, Mrs. Samuel S. Schrock, died that evening. It was, however, impossible for me to get home in time for the funeral, so I went on with my trip as planned and spent Thursday and Friday nights at the Three Rivers camp. Friday I, with others visited a side camp. On this trip we came through the Sequoia National Park where the big redwood trees are. There are also many other big trees in this park. Here I saw the largest tree in the world called "General Sherman." It is said to be the biggest living thing in the world.

Saturday, January the nineteenth, 1946, was my seventy-eighth birthday, and they helped me celebrate by singing several songs for me, one of them was "Happy birthday to you." A Mennonite preacher, by the name of Gerhard Warkentin of Los Angeles, led in this celebration and presented me with a small card with a suitable Bible verse on it. I then went with the Warkentins to Tulare where I boarded a train for Los Angeles, while they went on in their car. When I arrived in the city that evening Warkentin was there to meet me and took me to his home overnight. He took me to the depot the next morning, from whence I resumed my homeward trip to the east. I stopped over a day and night at Gulfport, Miss. I arrived at home early in the morning of January 26 and found that services had been announced for that day for Levi S. Schrock which I also attended.



Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 28 and 29, I attended services at Nappanee and visited the Medaryville C.P.S. camp. On Friday of this week I attended a sale at Goshen where nearly \$10000.00 worth of stock, machinery and merchandise was sold, that had all been contributed for the relief of war sufferers in Poland. On Saturday I attended a Peace Committee meeting in Chicago, so I was at home only two days of this week.

On Feb. 21 I was at Medaryville camp again. And on Monday, Feb. 25, I went to Madison county, O., in response to another call. On Thursday evening of this week I left from there for Sarasota, Florida, via Richmond, Va., arriving March 2. I started home Mar. 19. Amanda came home from Florida on April 6.

Our vacation in Florida was quite beneficial for us both. We felt better, had rested up, although we were both at work while there. Although I worked only a week I earned nearly half enough to pay my expenses for the trip. Amanda made \$20 a week for 9 weeks. We had met many old friends and made many new ones. The spiritual atmosphere was uplifting. It was a Christian privilege to attend the frequent religious meetings of different kinds, and to see the spirit of toleration among the different religious groups. It seemed that besides the plain Old Order Amish, and the Conservative Amish, the plainer Mennonites of the East and West were mostly in evidence and the preaching by the different groups was along the line of nonconformity and living humbly and in peace with God and man.

At home we again found much hard work awaiting us. I have during this spring, and am now (July 1, 1946) working hard. In fact it seems I am busy all the time, with work piling up constantly. On May 13, the fifty-second anniversary of my ordination to the ministry in answer to a call, I went to Holmes county, Ohio, where with Bishop Neil Hershberger of Burton, O., and Bishop John Renno of Belleville, Pa., I spent three days in church work, which matter was successfully adjusted. From Ohio I went directly to Chicago where I attended another M.C.C. meeting on Saturday, May 18.

On June 22 we went to Stark county, Ohio where we attended the wedding of Elmer Gingerich, a campeer for nearly five years and Fannie Miller. We had two church services on Monday and arrived home at 11:45 P.M. The rest of the week found me very busy in the hay field.

We had 17 acres in wheat to harvest in 1946, and I shocked at least two-thirds of it and also drove the binder part of the time. I could do the shocking real well despite my 78 years. Only July 6, I started shocking before 5 in the morning and worked until 9. Edwin finished by noon.

On Sunday, July 7, a baby was born to Edwin and Anna in the Goshen hospital. Mother and the little girl were brought home on Monday. They named the baby Polly Anna in honor of her great-grandmother, grandmother and mother. As it became apparent that we ought to build several rooms to our house for our use, while Edwin's would occupy most of the old house, we began making plans to build. However, lumber and all building material was hard to get; so we bought a barn in Middlebury, 16 by 24, 12 ft. to the square, for \$300 for material with which to build. We bought the barn in April, and I made the walls in June, and on July 27 we had a bee to wreck the barn and bring it home. We had it here by noon and erected part of it the same day. During the rest of the summer I worked on the house, or else was running around trying to get material to finish it.

On August 6 I attended another Peace Committee meeting in Chicago. As the season was very dry and our corn was planted rather thick for a dry season and also had many suckers started, on Aug. 8 I started cutting out suckers and surplus stalks in the hills and fed several armsful a day for two months until Oct. 8, when we finished cutting up corn. I husked but very little corn this season, as Edwin shredded all of it without husking it.

On Oct. 31 I attended an M.C.C. meeting in Chicago. On Saturday, Nov. 2 Jackie Stoltzfuses and John Gaschos of Oscoda, Mich., came here for a ten-day stay to help us with our house, which we greatly appreciated, and with their help and that of the other children, we got our rooms far enough along so that we moved in on the evening of Friday, Nov. 8. So now we are in our granddaddy house. On November 18, I, with several others, answered another call to come to Howard county, Ind., because of continued church trouble.

We are now living in our so-called DAWDY-HOUSE, and are taking it a little easier, although we are not idle. Mom, especially, is still taking care of the chickens and seems to be crowded with work. Just now she is getting ready to go to Florida for the winter as soon as opportunity offers. She is still taking treatments from Dr. Bills in Goshen, and he advised her to go to Florida for her health.

For me it was rather hard to leave our large old familiar rooms in our house and move into old folks' quarters. It seems like a big change, and I feel more like being an old man now, feel a lot older than I did before. I, however, still feel good and trust the Lord to keep me and preserve my health. My blood pressure is still very low, and I have an enlarged prostate which causes me some trouble. The Lord, however, has cured many diseases and I trust He will take care of my health in my somewhat advanced age. Cold weather seems much colder to me than it formerly did, and I am looking forward to spending at least part of the coming winter in the Sunny South.

Early in the morning of Jan. 2, 1947, I left home for Chicago to attend a two-day Mennonite Central Committee meeting. The next afternoon Amanda followed, and I met her at the station. We spent the night at the Van Buren Hotel, and the next morning left Chicago for our trip to Florida. We stopped at Arthur, Ill., over the weekend, attending services in one of Bishop Sam N. Beachy's districts. We had quite a singular experience there as the result of a very fervent prayer of a dear friend who was our host while we were there.

We proceeded on our trip on the Tuesday following, and, passing through New Orleans, arrived at Gulfport, Miss., on Wednesday afternoon. We spent two days there at the camp, having services for them on Thursday evening. We also visited the vicinity of Wiggins, where we spent several winters seventeen or eighteen years ago. We greatly enjoyed visits at the homes of several of our old neighbors and in the town of Wiggins.

We arrived at Sarasota, Florida, on Saturday evening, Jan. 11, and went out to Pinecraft with Bro. John. We again found many old friends and relatives there. Amanda started working for Dr. Cecil Millers on Monday morning, and a week later I started working in a celery packing house. I worked 5 and one-half days. I remained over four weeks, attending some twenty preaching services during that time. Services were held by ministers, by River Brethren and by Mennonites. The plainer Mennonites all attended here, and the sermons were all strictly evangelical and stressed plainness and true Christian living.



The last service I attended was a wedding service on Tuesday evening, February 11, 1947, where my brother John officiated. In the meantime son John and wife had come, and the morning after the wedding we accompanied them to the East Coast, where we visited three Etters boys and their families and also their mother. We had supper at Tome Etters', and then they took me to the station, and I started for home arriving on Friday evening.

On February 25, 1947, I left home again to visit the Powellsville C.P.S. camp, where I stayed three nights, holding preaching services two evenings. This evidently closes my camp visitations, as it is supposed that all the boys will soon be released. I arrived in Lancaster on Saturday morning and met my nephew Levi Miller in the market house. He took me to the Intercourse sale, where I took advantage of the opportunity to go to the Conestoga with a son of Preacher Jonas E. Stoltzfus to his home on his father's place, where I stayed that night. Sunday they took me along to their church services in the Sam M. Stoltzfus district. Bishop Sam is the oldest minister in the country in length of service. He is 88 years old and was ordained in 1888. That Sunday evening when Jonas left me at his brother Dan's place was the last time I saw Jonas, as he had a stroke just three weeks after that Sunday and never regained consciousness and died a few days later.

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I was away from home just one week on this trip, and after being home for ten days, I went to Mio, Michigan, over the weekend, staying with daughter and son-in-law Jacob Stoltzfus and family, and visiting old friends in the daytime.

At home I get my breakfast in my own quarters, but get my other meals at Edwin's, awaiting the return of my dear "better half." Heavy sleet in January broke down many limbs of trees in the yard, orchard, along fences, and in the woods. Cleaning up this mess took up a lot of my time for several weeks.

On Thursday, April 24, 1947, I started for Scottdale, Pa., and Grantsville, Maryland. I had some business at Scottdale and with Jonas B. Miller, at Grantsville, I attended services on Sunday at the Niverton meetinghouse. I returned home Monday, arriving Tuesday at 8:30. I was well on this trip, thanks to my dear Heavenly Father.

On Friday, May 2, Amanda arrived at home. She came through on the bus with Joni Millers. So living was more nearly normal again, as I did not have to bother any longer about my meals. On Saturday, May 3, I attended another M.C.C. meeting in Chicago at the Mennonite Mission. On Thursday, May 8, I attended communion services at Mio, Michigan. Also gave Mrs. Levi Troyer (Savilla) communion in the evening. On Sunday, May 11, 1947, Christ L. Miller was ordained as a minister of the Gospel at the communion services in the North Barrens district. He was the thirty-second minister ordained by me, besides an even dozen bishops.

On Tuesday, May 15, I answered another call to come to Orrville, Ohio, with four other bishops because of church trouble. After five days of labor, matters were peacefully adjusted and we returned home. On May 24, I attended a meeting in the Shipshewana schoolhouse which about 500 of our Amish brethren throughout Indiana attended--subject: parochial schools, or modification of limit of time required for our Amish children to attend the common schools.

On June 25, I left home for Oregon in response to a call to come and hold communion for the colony at Whiteson and Amity. I thought there were others to accompany me, but, when the time came to go, I was alone. Perhaps some would have



thought that a man of my age--seventy-nine and one-half--should not undertake such a trip alone, but for me I felt just as able to go alone as ever, and stood the trip real well. Son Manasseh and family were also in Oregon, and they accompanied me around to visit many old friends. They met me in Portland, when I arrived, and delivered me there again, when I left for home. We also visited Mt. Hood together.

On the morning of July 2, as we were about ready to start for Mt. Hood, a cross dog belonging to Dan Hostetler bit my right hand quite badly, but it did not get sore, and after I had it taped for four weeks, it healed up nicely. I arrived home on July 11. I had another call to Madison county, Ohio. After meditating awhile, I accepted the call. I was gone four days, but accomplished nothing, although there were six of us, all bishops.

August, 1947, was very warm nearly every day and was also very dry. I was working practically every day and am standing it real well. We had a number of visiting ministers in August and had frequent meetings. I attended 14 church meetings and four funerals from August 1 to the 31. Among the four funerals was one at Nappanee, Ind.--John Schlabach. They were the first couple that I married. That was on December 19, 1901. The widow is still living. I have married 164 couples since.

Sunday, August 10, after our church services we went to the reunion of the C.P.S. boys, and the camp directors, and camp visiting ministers of the four states: Michigan, Iowa, Indiana, and Ohio. This was held seven miles west of Goshen. There were probably more than 1500 there.

On September 19, 1947, we had a homecoming on the Naylor School grounds, with an attendance of about 200 from eight states. All our children were present, but none of my brother's and sister's families were all there. We had an enjoyable time and saw a number of our cousins, nephews and nieces whom we had not seen for a long time. If the Lord spares my life and health I would like to see another such a reunion within the next few years. Several of us gave talks and we also sang awhile in the afternoon. We had a carry-in dinner with plenty of eats for all.

On October 5 I attended communion services at Mio, Mich. Several other ministers from here accompanied me. We also gave the sacred emblems of the body and blood of Christ to Savilla, wife of Bishop Levi Troyer. She is, and has been helpless now for a year. Her mind is clear, however.

On October 10, I and several others answered a call to come to Nottawa, Mich., because of church trouble. On Thursday, October 16, three of us bishops answered a call to come to the assistance of the North Barrens Church district. The conditions there are not satisfactory at all, due mostly to the fact that the church policy of our former highly respected and revered Bishop David S. Kaufman, as practiced by us all these years, is being ignored. The matter was not satisfactorily settled. In the many dozens of times and places, when and where I, with others, was called on church matters, this case was probably less satisfactorily settled than any of the others. Sorry.

On Oct. 17 and 18 I attended M.C.C. meetings in Chicago, where, among other matters, it was unanimously agreed to move 2500 more Mennonite refugees to Paraguay, S. A. This October I again attended six communion services, and held four myself. On November 6, sister-in-law,--weak minded,--Lizzie Miller was brought to our place for us to care for her. We are to have six dollars per week for keeping her.



In November we received a kind invitation to the wedding of Amos Huyard and Lavine Fisher at Bird-In-Hand, Pa. Lavina is the daughter of my old, and now deceased, friend John L. Fisher. On Nov. 25, we, in company with Edwins and baby, left our home at 10:20 p.m. for Ft. Wayne. We left there at 1:10 a.m. and arrived in Lancaster in the evening and stayed with my old friend Davy E. Beiler. The next day, Thursday, Nov. 21, Thanksgiving Day, we all attended the wedding. In the next two weeks we attended seven church services and missed two appointments on account of being sick. We also attended another wedding and two funerals. We attended church services in Mifflin county on December 14 and left for home on Dec. 16, after staying two nights at son John's in Belleville.

On December 20, 1947, we attended the funeral of Daniel J. Bontrager, aged 86 years, 11 months, and 23 days. On Sunday afternoon, December 28, we attended the funeral of my only remaining uncle, Ruben E. Bontrager, aged 95 years, 5 months, and 15 days. We attended a wedding at Daniel E. Weirich's on Christmas.

We crossed the threshold of the New Year 1948 in fairly good health, although I aim to take two treatments a week at Dr. Bills'. On January 19 at about sundown I became 80 years old. The children were all here except Jakie's and John's. Also nearly all their children were here. I appreciated their visit.

On January 22 Bishop Samuel D. Hochstetler was arrested for alleged assault and battery because of the fact that he had his demented daughter, Lucy, chained to her bed. He had not committed any misdemeanor. The case was a put-up job, caused presumably by some ill feeling. He was sentenced the next morning to six months on the penal farm, before any of his children could be there to help him answer the questions intelligibly. Nearly all the businessmen of Goshen were aroused, and a number of them made some very uncomplimentary remarks about the court, such as "This is the greatest miscarriage of justice that I ever saw," and "Have our courts become as rotten as that?" I spent quite a bit of time in the next few weeks because of this case.

On the evening of February 27 I accompanied David D. Helmuth to his home at Kalona, Iowa. I attended church services there on Sunday at Tobias Bontrager's, returning home that night. I also had a call to come to Howard county direct upon my return from Iowa. But because of the cold weather and not feeling any too well, I did not go, and I also cancelled a call to come to Nottawa, Michigan. Sunday, March 28, I did not feel well enough to attend any church services. This was the first time I missed church on Sunday because of ill health for about five years.

On Wednesday, March 21, 1948, I attended a large peace meeting in Washington, D.C. I am a member of the Peace Section of the Mennonite Central Committee. The meeting was held before the Army Military Committee and many attended from the three Peace Church groups: Mennonites (different groups), Brethren, and Quakers. In April I attended several peace meetings in Goshen and one in Chicago.

On April 20 I attended a bishop meeting in Holmes county, O., on account of conditions in Madison county, O. On May 12, I, with others, went to Mio, Michigan, and attended the funeral of Savilla, wife of Bishop Levi S. Troyer. Levi was in a hospital in Ann Arbor, Mich., at that time in a serious condition. On May 29 I attended a large meeting of the Conscientious Objectors' Peace Institute. This meeting was held in a grove 7 miles west of Goshen and was caused by the new peace-time Military Conscription Bill. On July 17 I attended another M.C.C. meeting in Chicago. In August the fourth All-Mennonite World Conference was held in Goshen, Ind., and



Newton, Kansas. I attended at both places and visited around and attended church services in Kansas and Oklahoma for about 12 days.

I did not see a doctor since March 6 and was quite well and did much farm work during the summer. I plowed several days and also cultivated corn and did much other hard work during the summer and was well able to do it. I cut up more than 200 shocks of corn in September and October. On October 2 I cut up and tied 68 sixty-four hill shocks. On October 26 we attended the funeral of Dr. Clarence Bahler in Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Some business at the M.C.C. headquarters at Akron, Pa., and an invitation to a wedding at the home of Stephen E. Stoltzfus in Lancaster county, Pa., caused me to leave home on November 5 for Pennsylvania. Ten days later Amanda also came and surprised me at a wedding at Daniel Esh's. Together we attended other weddings and church meetings and a funeral. I attended a total of six weddings, one a double wedding. I married six couples. I attended one wedding only for the evening meal.

On November 23 we left a wedding at David Lapp's at five in the afternoon and started for home, arriving the next afternoon at two o'clock. The following day, November 25, 1948, Thanksgiving Day, we attended the wedding of Melvin Mast and Fannie Graber in our home church district.

On Thursday, December 2, my son Manasseh and wife left for their new home near Calico Rock, Arkansas. They expect to work for the Mennonite Mission Board at that place, conducting mission work from now on. They sold their home here and bought a home there and are now living in a log house. They expect to give their time and service for the welfare of the poor and ignorant of the Ozarks in Arkansas to raise their standards of living both in secular matters and spiritually, the latter, of course, being the main issue.

On December 30, 1948, we attended the wedding of another niece of mine, Alma, daughter of brother Dave. She married Ammon J. Miller. After the wedding at two p.m., I left for home and went to Chicago to attend the annual meeting of the Mennonite Central Committee for the next several days. However, I was not well at all and left for home on New Year Day, at 9:30 a.m. The next day, Sunday, my condition was about normal again and I attended church services.

The weather this winter up to this time has been unusually mild, down to zero but once and a few days of cold winds, otherwise nice and pleasant nearly every day. This is January 10, 1949.

Jan. 19, 1949. Today I am 81 years old. It does not seem possible that I am now of an age that I used to think was very old. As I look back over my bygone days I find so very much to be thankful for to my dear loving, merciful Father. I have been blessed abundantly and have enjoyed the favor of God over many of the associates of my youth.

Where some children just grow up without any Christian admonition, I had the privilege of having parents that aimed to live in accordance to their expressed belief and taught their children by word and precept the importance of the doctrines of true Christianity. I had congenial playmates and schoolmates and later on comrades that were mostly moral in words and conduct. For this I feel grateful to Him, the giver of all good gifts.



I was taught to pray and to believe in prayer. I was given a wife that was a true Christian, who became a true mother of our children, a loving wife and companion for nearly twenty-eight years. We were abundantly blest, far beyond some of my young associates. My children were all respectful and respectable, and healthy in body and mind--a great blessing! Amidst the enjoyment of these blessings, the Lord saw fit to bring upon me one of the sorest bereavements that can befall any of His children--my dear wife was taken away in an instant without the slightest warning. After having a little time to think it over, I again saw that God was exceptionally good to me. While other fathers were left, sometimes with a number of small children on their hands, mine were all able to take care of themselves, and they were all good and kind to me. In due time He also provided me with another good and true Christian wife and stepmother for my children and mother of another son that came to bless our union. I was again blessed beyond all my merits.

The Lord so led that I had the privilege of extensive traveling and seeing many parts of our fair land and visiting friends and congregations throughout the country, having traveled many more miles than any other of our brethren ever has--up to this time, more than 432,000 miles on railroads. Since it was to be my lot to be a minister of the Gospel, I also consider it a favor from God that I was called when still quite young--twenty-six years old. At just about the age that Jesus was when He sacrificed His life for us--thirty-three--I was ordained a bishop. It has so happened that I had had many co-ministers to work with in my different home districts and others of which I had bishop oversight, and I have always had such that I could very well get along without any trouble. This is another great blessing that I have had.

I trust the good Lord to further care for me the limited time that I have still to live. To His glory I am enumerating some of His many blessings, I could mention many more. I have seen the inside of a few hospitals, but only to visit friends that are patients there. I am now starting in on my eighty-second year, not knowing what the future has in store for me, but knowing that the God who has cared for me in the past years and has so abundantly blest me will also care for me the rest of my days, whether they be days of adversity or prosperity. He can and will so lead that all things can and will be blessings to them that love and serve Him.

O, that I might love Him more, and serve Him and my fellow men, my brethren and sisters, better the remaining days of my life than I have in the past. I cannot find words to fully express my heartfelt gratitude to my Lord for the blessings He has bestowed upon poor me. I see where I have made many mistakes in my life and have through them suffered loss financially and otherwise.

I trust that all my mistakes, sins, and shortcomings are covered with the sacrificial blood of Christ, in whom I firmly believe and in whom I trust.

Although I have an ailment that occasionally causes me some trouble and inconvenience, I am still able to work, and work hard, when the weather is not too bad. From December 2 to February 9, 1949, I cut, sawed, split, and hauled together twenty-eight loads of buzzwood all alone, except that my son Edwin helped to saw two trees down and haul eight loads. It is now sawed, and I have a large pile of wood to split, besides a lot of other work to do.

For some time I felt somewhat alarmed because of the condition of the church at McMinnville, Oregon. According to reports, there was some disunity there and they have not had communion for some time. As I had been very largely instrumental in establishing the church there, I could not get away from the sense of duty to make a



visit with the brotherhood there and if possible be of some help to them. And as my above mentioned ailment was again getting more serious, I concluded to make a trip to see the noted Ortman doctors at Canistota, S.D., and then continue my trip to Oregon.

I consequently started on this trip on March 10, 1949, and after four days in So. Dak., I went on to Oregon. I returned on the twenty-seventh and was met at Elkhart by son Edwin who informed me that I was to preach a funeral sermon forty minutes later for Mrs. Rudy Bontrager some thirty miles away. We arrived there about two minutes late. Services had started.

On April first, Edwin's moved on a rented farm two miles north of Lagrange, and we were left alone. I put out six acres of corn and nine acres of oats. A good neighbor of ours plowed one and one-half days for me, and a grandson of mine helped me some. Edwin and my good neighbors furnished the labor for threshing, but I cut all the oats and Edwin's wheat with the binder and shocked a good part of it. Edwin and some of the neighbors also put up most of our hay. The barn is full of hay and straw.

On August 13 we went to Oscoda county, Mich., to attend a reunion of the Jacob C. Miller family. We had a pleasant trip, returning on August 18.

On September 30 I attended a Peace Section meeting in Chicago at the Atlantic Hotel. This fall I attended only two communion services, while last spring I attended seven and a year ago nine such services.

We had several invitations to weddings in Lancaster county, Pa., this fall which we did not accept, but as I had business at Akron, Pa., in connection with my sponsorship of a refugee family from Germany, formerly of the Ukraine, Russia, I decided to accept the invitation to the wedding of a granddaughter of my old friend David E. Beiler of Bird-In-Hand, Pa. I left home on Sunday night and attended the wedding on Tuesday and went to Akron on Wednesday and got matters straightened out there.

I attended a total of four weddings and returned home on November 25. Another wedding was announced before I left for home and an earnest invitation for us to attend caused us to seriously consider the trip. It happened that Amos, a son of my former intimate friend Johnnie L. Fisher, was to marry Anna, a daughter of Mike Stoltzfus, another of our very intimate friends. After some planning we decided not to go, until a co-minister of mine, Sam T. Schrock said they would go with us if we would go by train. So we decided to go, and twenty-four hours later we were on our way Dec. 6, 1949. We returned nine days later, after attending two weddings, one funeral, and four other church meetings.

January 19, 1950. With the close of this day closes 82 full years of my life. The Lord has still been good to me, and I am about in normal health. I am slowing up in my work physically and possible mentally, but I am still able to work and do the chores and other necessary work.

On Jan. 31, Edwin's moved back home with us, using the east part of the house. I have worked but a few days in the woods and did not get up any wood for sawing. In February I was sick for a day, and they had the doctor here twice for me. It was nothing very serious. I attended the M.C.C. annual meeting in Chicago in March and from there went to Arthur, Ill., to attend the funeral of Gideon Miller, a step-brother of mine. I remained over Sunday, attending the funeral and a church service on Sunday, and another service on Monday.



In April we attended a funeral in Ohio on Saturday the 22nd, and services on Sunday, and came home that night. I attended three communion services here and two in Howard county, where two ministers were ordained.

We put out six acres of oats and eight acres of corn. I did most of the plowing, a grandson did some of it. Edwin is working at the carpenter trade. I mowed and raked our 12 acres of hay and a neighbor put it up on shares. I also did most of the corn cultivating myself.

June 10, 1950, was a sad day for us. My sister Pollie died at four in the morning after a rather severe illness of less than twenty-four hours. About 1000 people attended her funeral two days later on Monday, June 12. Her age was 79 years, 10 months, and 4 days. This was the first death among us for over 20 years. Sister Anna died in Dec., 1929. There are at this time still seven of us living. David, the youngest is 58 and his hair is as gray as mine, and I am in my eighty-third year.

In August, with some assistance from Levi and Edwin, I put up our second crop of alfalfa hay--five loads. On Tuesday, August 8, I attended the funeral of an old friend of mine, Christ J. Yoder, at Grantsville, Md. On August 15 I had a bad fall, nearly broke my neck. However, I was able to keep on plowing all day. The latter part of that week I had another fall hurting my left knee quite badly, but I was able to continue working. It seems I am slowing up, except when I stumble; then I quickly fall.

On August 31, 1950, my cousin and most intimate friend during our childhood days and ever since, John J. Mast, was almost instantly killed in an automobile accident two miles south of Lagrange. We played and worked together when young, were in each other's company nearly every Sunday and often during the week and evenings. We were side by side when under instruction and when baptized. We made a trip to Kansas together when we were young men, accompanied them on their wedding day, sat side by side the day I was ordained, and were closely associated in Amish Aid Plan work. He was four days less than a month older than I.

I attended another M.C.C. meeting in Chicago on October 17, 1950, and an M.C.C. peace meeting at Winona Lake, Ind. On November 11, I attended the funeral of my cousin, Deacon Harry Bontrager at Hutchinson, Kan., and attended several church services the next two days, and a service in Mayes county, Oklahoma on the fifteenth.

On December 7 Amenda left for Florida because of her arthritis and neuritis which was gradually getting worse again.

Daughter Lydia visited here the early part of December and took Edwin's eighteen-month-old Tommy along home to care for him a month or so. On December 16 we got the sad news that Tommy was in a Bay City hospital with infantile paralysis, or polio as it is now called. He was there for about 8 weeks, and with the good treatment that he received, and in answer to the many prayers that ascended to the throne, he was wholly restored.

On January 11, 1951, I also bought a ticket for Sarasota, Florida, through Memphis, and from there I made a four-day side trip to Calico Rock, Arkansas, and visited my son Manasseh and wife Mary. I arrived at Sarasota on the evening of January 19, my eighty-third birthday. On January first I had been alone at home all day and in the afternoon, while musing on bygone days, I began writing my thoughts as an autobiography poem of sixteen verses. The words just seemed to come to my mind, and in two hours I had composed the sixteen-verse poem covering the 83 years of my life.

I spent nearly four weeks in Florida and worked nine days and was paid \$38.30 for my labor. I attended about twenty-five preaching services, and left for home on February 14, arriving at home on the seventeenth. I baptized four precious souls the next day at our regular services. I also attended a wedding on the twenty-second at Eli Mast's.

On March 21 I went to St. Louis and got a Koch Glyoxylide shot, administered by Dr. Adrian D. Nichols. On March 27, I, with others, went to Oscoda county, Michigan to attend the funeral of Emma, widow of John S. Yoder. On April 11 I went to New York to meet son Levi and wife on their return from their six-weeks European trip. On April 20 Amanda, my better half, came home from Florida. On April 23, 24, and 25 I had lumbago so bad that I could barely move, could not be up at all.

I had a call pending since the fall of 1950 to come to Oregon to hold communion for them and help them in other church matters. However, conditions were such that I did not see my way clear to go until the spring of 1951. I agreed to come in June, and by that time there were also two weddings announced.

We planned to go the early part of June, but other circumstances and an M.C.C. meeting in Chicago caused us to put it off until June 17. So on that Sunday evening we left Elkhart for McMinnville, Oregon. We arrived there on Wednesday afternoon, per Burlington and the Great Northern railways. The next few weeks were very busy ones with meetings and three weddings in the first eleven days. We found a very bad two-sided condition in the church, caused by distrust, suspicion, backbiting and slander. After several weeks of labor, including a trip by me to Centralia, Washington, matters were straightened out, so that we could hold communion for them and also ordain a bishop, Menno Swartzentruber. So now we hope they can be a self-sustaining church.

We worked more or less at Menno's, and also picked berries and beans at other places, amounting to the sum of \$186.70. Amanda, however, earned nearly all of this as I made but a small part of it. We greatly enjoyed fellowship with the dear brethren and sisters at this place, and especially with Menno Swartzentruber's and their very nice family. They so very kindly offered us two furnished rooms in a large commodious house, with all conveniences free, and did not even accept pay for the quart of milk we got from them daily.

After a prolonged stay of just nine weeks, we returned to our home where much work awaited us. Edwin's were well and everything all right. But since they had an abundance of rain all summer, weeds, as well as everything else, grew very fast. I spent a lot of time the first few weeks cutting a lot of different kinds of weeds.

Because of our absence in Oregon we missed attending the funeral of my very close friend and brother-in-law and co-minister Fernandis Miller. We were very intimate friends since the age of 17, and he married my sister Pollie just eleven days after I married his sister Mattie in December, 1890. We were very sorry that we could not be present at the funeral, but the fact remains that it will not be very long until we can again be united in those Heavenly Mansions.

Early in November, 1951, we received an invitation to a wedding at Jess Lapp's in Lancaster county, Pa. They urged us to come, as there were so many weddings and a shortage of bishops to take care of them. We left home on the eleventh and came home on the 24th, after attending three weddings and one Sunday service.



On December 13, we left our home for Sarasota, Florida, arriving there late in the evening of December 15. We attended preaching services the next day, and on Monday morning Amanda started again working for the Gilberts. Mrs. Gilbert is a very nice lady to work for. I, however, did not get anything to do except that I donated several days work on a house that was being built to replace one that was burned down several months before.

On March 13, just three months after starting for Florida, I started home again. I attended sixty-three preaching services while in Florida. I had plenty of work after my return home, sowing clover seed, splitting wood, etc. It was still cold and wintry weather. I missed two Sundays going to church, because of the cold winds. Amanda came home the last of April.

On May 11, at our communion service I ordained David D. Helmuth as bishop to take my place. My failing eyesight, old age, and much absence from home were the reasons for this move.

My eyesight had been failing for more than a year and I had consulted several eye specialists. They found that I not only had cataracts in both eyes but also glaucoma, my left eye being much more affected than my right eye. I started taking treatments for my eyes under Dr. Cassady's directions in April, 1950. This treatment is for glaucoma. They cannot operate for this disease. I continued having his medicine dropped in my eyes for four months with very little, if any, improvement. After examining my eyes again on Aug. 14, Dr. Cassady said my right eye was not far from normal but my left eye had shown but little, if any, improvement.

On that date, Aug. 14, 1952, I started for Carning, Arkansas, to the Carning Research Hospital, where some patients had received very remarkable results from taking the Lincoln treatments. I arrived there on the morning of Aug. 16. After consulting Dr. Schirmer that day I went on to Calico Rock, Arkansas, and visited three days with my son Manasseh and his wife Mary. I arrived at Carning again on the evening of Aug. 20, and stayed at the Carning Hotel. The next morning, after having had an examination by a woman doctor, Mrs. Gray, I took my first treatment.

On September 29, I got my fortieth treatment and a Koch shot of Glyoxilide and left for home at noon. I arrived in Chicago the next morning, where son Levi and wife and my wife Amanda met me and took me to the office of Dr. O. G. Kuchynka, ten miles out from the Loop, where I took another Lincoln treatment. Two weeks later I returned and took a total of 23 treatments there. I have a total of 63 treatments and do not think that I can see any better than I could before starting with them. I do not think that I will take any more.

On December 9, 1952, we again left our home for Sarasota, Florida, to spend the winter in that mild climate. Amanda again resumed her winter's work at F. L. Gilbert's, where she had worked the two winters before. Mrs. Gilbert is a very kind lady. After we were there a week, she paid Amanda again and said she will raise her wages \$5.00 and give her \$30.00 a week.

The annual meeting of the M.C.C. was again held in Chicago, and I was urged to be sure to attend, so I left Sarasota for Chicago on Tuesday morning, Dec. 30 and arrived in Chicago on Jan. 1, 1953. On the evening of Jan. 3, I went on home. Edwin and his family met me at Elkhart and took me along home. I was at home but four days, when I again left for Sarasota. When I got to Jacksonville, about 9 p.m. Friday, January 10, I was about sick and was chilled and shaking all over until 11 p.m., when I boarded a train for Tampa. I had eaten some supper and as soon as I was in

my seat on the train I had to vomit and threw up everything that I had eaten that day.

Then I was real sick and could hardly sit up at all. At Tampa the train was five hours late for Sarasota. I finally got to Sarasota at 4:20 p.m. and a kind lady that was at the station took me to our Florida home. I at once went to bed. A doctor was called, and he pronounced it the flu. On Monday afternoon I left the bed and was up after that, although I got an attack of pleurisy on Friday which bothered me for nearly a week. I then felt quite well, although rather weak because of very low blood pressure and after effects of the flu.

In February Amanda also had a rather hard touch of influenze. She also felt her dizziness again and took treatments from Dr. Anderson, a chiropractor.

On Tuesday, February 10, I was hit by a car and knocked to the pavement. I was not hurt seriously but it could easily have been very serious. In a week I had fully recovered.

Amanda continued taking treatments at Dr. Anderson's office and Dr. Anderson also gave me some treatments for my eyes.

We had real warm weather in Florida during March and part of February, and the early part of April. We left Sarasota on the morning of the 21st of April. We had a cool spell for nearly a week, and when we left it was only 48 above zero at sunrise. We came home by car with Menno Schmucker's and got to our home at 7 p.m. on Thursday evening, the 24th, with the thermometer showing 59 above zero. The week following was real cool.

On Tuesday, April 5, Amanda started taking treatments at the office of Dr. Sherlock, a woman chiropractor. Several days later I went to the eye specialist, Dr. Cassady in South Bend. He thought my glaucoma was a little better, but gave me no hope for a cure.

If it should be the Lord's will that my eyesight should not improve, and I should get to the point where I could no longer see to read and take care of myself, I hope and trust that I will patiently adjust myself to His will and continue to praise Him for His goodness and mercy.

May 23, 1953, we have now been home from Florida for a month. I have done quite a bit of work around the place, but it does not go so well anymore, because of my failing eyesight. I have escaped having any bad falls so far and hope I may be spared such mishaps further on.

I have just looked over some of my records and find that up to this time I have preached 2579 sermons, of which 259 have been communion sermons, 136 funeral sermons, and 755 were only the opening services. I have baptized 473 persons and married 196 couples. I have ordained 36 ministers and 15 bishops and helped ordain several more. I have traveled more than 466,000 miles by railroad and nearly 60,000 by bus and car. I have traveled on all the larger railroads in the U.S.A. and Canada, except two, having traveled on about 40 of the larger lines and many of the smaller roads, some of which are now incorporated in the larger lines. Some of the larger lines have also been absorbed by other systems.

I feel that I have been highly favored by these privileges. I have never been in any serious accident. I have up to this time never been a patient in a hospital. A minor injury would often cause me to feel faint, but I never was unconscious in a



fainting spell, having never been unconscious, except when asleep. I never lie down for a rest of sleep during the day. I sometimes take a nap on the rocking chair. I have never been so sick that I could not help myself, or get out of or in bed without help. I feel very grateful to my Lord for all these blessings, and, of course, do not know what may happen before I pass on out of this life. Because of my failing eyesight, I have to be very careful when moving around in the house and outside. However, my faithful wife, my "better half" is ever willing to help me, whenever I may be in need of help. My children are also all very good and kind to me. May the Lord continue to bless my kind and helpful helpmeet and restore her somewhat failing health. It seems my life work is about done, although I still have some hopes that my sight may at least be partly restored, so that I can continue to do some of the necessary work on the place. At this time I still have the strength and health to do considerable work. Life is so very uncertain. During the night of the 22nd of May the wife of a nephew of mine gave birth to twin babies and twenty-four hours later she died. Such is life. I am looking forward to my translation to my Heavenly Home.

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Up to this point I finished this writing in June 1953, and as my old manuscript was getting worn quite badly, and I was unable, because of failing eyesight, to do any more typing, I got it mimeographed. I had twenty-five copies made, and assumed to give each of my children a copy and sell the rest. As I am able I expect to continue to write this Life Story. Perhaps when I am gone my children will finish it and possibly get it published in book form.

It is now December 11, 1953, and we have now been in Florida again for a month, with Amanda working as housemaid for Mrs. Gilbert. My health is fairly good. I would be able to work, if I could see better. I am still having medicine dropped in my eyes four or five times daily. Otherwise I am not doctoring at all. I walk up town--one-half mile--twice nearly every day, making two to three and one-half miles about every day on some of the busiest streets of the city. I have to cross a number of cross streets. I try to be very careful to avoid being hit.

Last June my son Manasseh and wife Mary visited us and their brothers and sisters here in Indiana and also daughter Lydia and family in Michigan, Oscoda county. Son Levi and wife and daughter Katie and husband also went with them to Michigan, and so we too accompanied them. We were there only two nights. Since I am rather hard of hearing I did not get to visit much with the Stoltzfuses. I planned to go some time later and stay for several weeks. So in August I had an

opportunity to go and stay with the Stoltzfus family nine days. I had a pleasant visit with Lydia and her nice family. They seem to me to be about the kindest and most peaceable family that I know of. Perhaps I should not make it quite so strong, as there is a family living at McMinnville, Oregon, with which we stayed nine weeks several years ago that is just such a nice family.

I had a lot of hard work to do all summer, cutting and digging out yellow dock and Canada thistles, also bull thistles. This took a lot of my time, but when fall came I found that there were quite a lot of those weeds that still went to seed.

We had but little over two acres in corn this year (1953) and I cut that all up, eighty-seven shocks. I planted all our potatoes and dug them all, but that was not a very big job as the potatoes this year were the poorest crop we ever had. We got more than we planted, but I heard of some that did not get as many as they planted.

We had a good team of horses, and with our driving mare as a third horse we had a fairly good three horse team. But last fall one morning the driving mare was found dead. Last June one Sunday morning one of the big mares was down in a mud puddle. We got her out with the aid of a neighbor's tractor but the next morning she died. This fall we sold the other mare and also the driving pony which we had for nearly a year. The pony had some habits we did not like and as we were going to Florida for the winter we did not deem it wise to keep him. So now we have no horses on the place. We expect to buy a driving horse next spring.

January 19, 1954. This is my eighty-sixth birthday and the day passed very quietly. In the forenoon, however, some of the Pinecraft women visited Amanda and told her that there is to be a singing at Joel Knepps that afternoon, and that we should be sure to be there. I was a little slack in wanting to go, but she got me to go. There were about fifty there. We sang quite a while. Then they asked me to give a talk. I consented and then asked brother Abe Yoder to lead in prayer, which he did.

After that Joel opened their refrigerator and started handing out the ice cream. Just then for the first time it dawned on me that this was to be a birthday surprise for me, and it certainly was. They told afterwards that they had sung Happy Birthday before that but as I was sitting back and am a little hard hearing I did not get it.

They had plenty of ice cream for the crowd, and presented me with some fifteen or twenty Birthday greeting cards, some of which contained money besides. I felt my unworthiness very keenly and tried to thank them for it all but could hardly find words to express myself. It certainly was a surprise to me. So now I am starting my eighty-seventh year.

We have been well so far this winter and attended preaching services every Sunday. Have held services myself a number of times. At the Tuttle Ave. Church we heard a Mennonite minister who had come originally from the Ukraine, Russia. He had been an atheist and a Communist and a Communist teacher, but he was truly converted. He is well educated and has a good English education although he speaks English quite brokenly. He can read five or six languages.

On Friday evening, Feb. 12, son Edwin and wife and three children arrived in Florida and spent a very interesting week here. They had real nice weather every day and nearly every evening had the privilege of listening to a very strong evangelistic sermon by a spirit-filled minister that happened to be here at the time. We also enjoyed their visit very much. Edwin's were accompanied by his brother-in-law Daniel Bontreger and wife and two children. Daniel preached for us one evening.



In January I first called on Dr. Crage at the Medical Arts Building. He gave stronger medicine for my eyes than Dr. Cassady had been giving. Now on April 2 I do not think that I can see quite as well as I could 2 months ago. With a good light or sunshine I can still read plain print or writing. On April 22 I called on Dr. Crage the last time, and paid him ten dollars, total was \$25.00. His charge was reasonable as he took close examinations. The pressure in my eyes is less from glaucoma, and he thinks the cataracts are doing the most harm to my constantly failing eyesight.

During this winter here in Florida I had much leisure time and wrote a considerable lot of poetry. Among other writings I wrote the Sermon on the Mount in verse and the first and twenty-third Psalms, the latter also in German. I also wrote one thirty-six verse poem on the last eighty years and another of forty verses on Then and Now as pertaining to the conditions of our churches. I got them typed for me.

The former peaceful conditions of the Pinecraft Church were somewhat lamentably disturbed by doings and actions of certain brethren. Nevertheless we again greatly enjoyed the Christian fellowship of the many tourists from the north. We met and made many friends.

On April 28, 1954, we again started for our home in Indiana. We went by car with a Mennonite sister of Archbold, Ohio, whose name was Miss Richner. Miss Minnie Miller also accompanied us. We stopped the first night at Bishop Jonas Hershberger's at Montezuma, Ga. We had a very pleasant visit there. We arrived home at 4 o'clock on Friday afternoon and found the folks all well. Communion had been announced for Sunday May 9, but I was unable to attend because of a spell of diarrhea. We and Joel Knepps had taken Communion on our last Monday evening in Florida, so we had our Communion this spring anyway.

On Saturday after our arrival at home, Edwin took me to the home of Amos Miller, where I bought a driving horse, a good one except that he is nineteen years old. I again missed our Sunday service on May 23 because of a similar ailment, but on June 6 we were both able to attend.

I again called on Dr. Cassady at South Bend soon after reaching home, and he and an assistant doctor state that it was glaucoma. I do not know what, where or if I will try to get anything more done for Glaucoma than I have been doing now for over 2 years, that is, having medicine dropped in my eyes.

The weather had been very wet up to the time when we arrived at home. We had a shower after we arrived at home, and then it did not rain for nearly a month, and the ground got so dry and hard that Edwin could not get the corn ground plowed until June ninth, when we finished it, but it was dry and hard then again after we had a very heavy rain on May 31 and June 1.

We had a good summer for growing crops with much rain, and the ground was too wet to cultivate the corn until the weeds had a good start, but the corn also grew fast and has made good corn.

On August 21st we had our biannual homecoming or reunion at son Levi's. There were many there from a distance. We six brothers and sisters Katie were all present. Also a large number of the next generation were there, many of whom we had never seen before. However, some were missing, whom we would very much have liked to see there. A week before this reunion we also attended the Moses J. Yoder reunion at Martin Bontrager's.

It is now September 11, 1954, going well on towards fall and cold weather, and my work no doubt will not be much anymore this fall. I dug four post holes and set four posts the other day in very hard ground. It was about a day's work for me.

October 27, 1954. I will soon have this typed and mimeographed and may not live to add any more to this the story of my life. My eyesight is constantly but slowly getting poorer, and on these cloudy and somewhat dark fall days I can hardly see to read or write. I cut up seventy-one shocks of corn again this fall, and that I suppose will about close my usefulness as far as manual labor is concerned. We expect, the Lord willing and health permitting, to leave our home again for Sarasota, Florida, within the next two weeks.

We expect to divide our church district again on November seventh. This will be the third time that we have divided it since about 1920.

\* \* \* \* \*

On Sunday, November 7th, 1954, we attended our church services for the last time this fall. We peacefully divided our church district. This was the third time that we had to divide it. The first time it was divided on December 7, 1919, thirty-five years ago. Most of our children visited us that afternoon and at 8 o'clock in the evening, fast time, they took us to Elkhart, where all the children, except John and Manasseh, and a number of the grandchildren accompanied us.

We left Elkhart for Toledo at 8:12, Standard time, with tickets for Sarasota, Florida. We arrived there on Tuesday afternoon at 4, where Mrs. Gilbert's servant, Lindsey Stentz, awaited us. We found that Mrs. Gilbert had employed a cook, and assigned to her the room that Amanda has had for the last four winters. They had prepared the other, smaller room for us. We can do real well with this room although it is not as convenient as the other.

Preacher Joseph J. Miller of Plain City, Ohio, came the same week, and so we had services each Sunday since we are here. On Sunday, Nov. 28, we had communion, with twenty-two members taking part.

The longest cool spell we ever experienced in Florida (six or seven weeks) ended at Christmas time. Had no killing frost but continued cool. Had gas fire heat every day one and one-half months.

February 9, 1955. We have now been here in Florida three full months. The cool spell we had in November and December is said to have been the longest cool spell for this part of Florida on record so early in the winter. After New Year Day we had a week of quite warm weather, then another cool spell set in. This morning (Feb. 9th) it was 42. During this last cool spell the north has had much zero weather.

Preacher Milo Yoder and wife came in December and preached impressive sermons a number of times. David Garver of Plain City, Ohio, came in January and also served faithfully in preaching the Word.

A number of Mennonite and Conservative ministers preached the true gospel every Sunday, and Sunday evening, and some evenings during the week. On Sunday, Feb. 6, we listened to four very good gospel sermons in that one day.



Several families do not attend these services and miss the blessings that they might have.

Preacher Abe J. Yoder of Stark Co., Ohio, was with us for about two months this winter and preached a number of good sermons, including the funeral sermon for Mrs. Dan Mast of Holmes Co., Ohio. She died soon after their arrival here for her health. She died quite suddenly during the night.

David A. Miller of Thomas, Okla., also spent about ten days here and preached a number of sermons. On March 5 Eli Schrock of Sugar Creek, Ohio, also came. He came because of ill health during the winter. He regained his health and preached a number of good sermons. He remained long enough to help us along in our communion services on April 10. His presence was very much appreciated by us all. About forty members took part in the communion. They were from four different states and eight different settlements.

My eyesight has been failing faster during the last 3 months than before.

In accordance with previous plans we left Sarasota at 4 a.m. on April 28 per car for our home. Two Zimmerman sisters, one of them a trained nurse, had asked us some weeks before to go with them to our northern home. Their home is Ephrata, Lancaster County, Pa., but for certain reasons they were going to Goshen, Indiana, for several days. Their plans took us through the mountains of northern Georgia, North Carolina, and through Cincinnati, Ohio. We arrived at our home at noon on Saturday, April 30. Communion services had been announced for both districts for the next day, Sunday, May 1. The members were very nearly all present, and it was my lot to again hold the communion service for them, quite possibly for the last time. We were very glad to meet all our members together again and it seemed they were all happy to see us back.

The weather was pleasant and warm. We found Edwins all well, and we also were in our usual health. On heavy clay land like ours, oat seeding had not been finished. There is repair work to do around the house, but I am really not able to do much of it because of my failing eyesight.

I also found that I have not the strength anymore to do much work, although I set a few posts and fixed some fences.

We were invited to the wedding of Elmer Wingard and Ella Frye on May 12, and I was asked to officiate at the wedding. This was the 197th pair married by me and likely the last.

I tried to do some repair work on fences, but I agreed with my dear ones that the little that I get accomplished is not enough to balance the danger of doing some bodily harm to myself, which might require their care. So I am doing practically nothing. I went to South Bend on Monday, May 16, to see Dr. Cassady about my eyes. I continue the old treatment.

June 21, 1955. - In the first seven weeks that we were at home we attended ten services. At four of those services I preached the main sermon, one of which was a communion sermon and one a wedding sermon. Also had the opening sermons at three services. I have practically quit trying to do any work about the farm. Edwin is still working at the trailer factory and doing the farming. We cut most of the clover crop last evening for hay.



Our children were all here during the last three days but all left for their homes again now. We enjoyed their pleasant visit, and as Sunday was Father's Day they presented to me a folding chair, which will answer very well for a lawn chair. I am sitting in it now.

On July 2 I attended the annual reunion of the descendants of uncle Joseph E. Bontrager at Nottawa, Michigan. I met many cousins that I seldom see. On July 4 we attended the reunion of the descendants of uncle Eli C. Bontrager, one mile east of Middlebury, Indiana.

The weather this spring has been mostly cool, with semi-warm days mixed in through June. But the last days of June and all of July were real warm and also quite dry, having had but a few light showers. Temperature was up in the 90's, and one day over 100°.

October, 1955. This has been a very warm summer. The entire month of July was hot and also the last days of June. Had several hot days the middle of September. It also was a dry summer for most areas. We were well all summer. My eyesight, however, is failing more and more. We attended church services every Sunday. Last Sunday at a council meeting the church agreed to have a minister ordained in this west district at a communion service on October 8.

Corn is fully matured and seems to be a very fair crop in spite of the hot and dry summer. All crops were good.

On the eighth of October we had our communion service and also ordained a minister. The lot fell on brother Andrew J. Schrock. He is a nice young man and a good neighbor. May the Lord richly bless him in his new calling. He is one of our near neighbors.

To date (Oct. 10) we have not had a killing frost, and today it is real warm, some in the seventies. I am now only lacking four months of being eighty-eight years old. My health is fairly good. I have no pains or aches. I have never had rheumatism, neuritis or arthritis, have never been sick or been in any serious accident, have always had good eyes and have seen much and read much in my time. Three or four years ago, however, my eyes began to fail and now my sight is gone in my left eye and my right eye is also failing very much, so that I am able to do but very little work. I am just sitting around and thinking.

I, of course, do not know what my few remaining years will bring. The infirmities of old age now have to be faced, and I trust my heavenly Father to see me safely through all my coming trials.

God has been very good and merciful to me through my long life and I cannot thank Him enough for it. I only wish I had served Him better and kept my thoughts and deeds in a more spiritual attitude and avoided all carnality. May God have mercy on me.

My race on earth is nearly run  
My eyesight now is nearly gone  
My work on earth is nearly done  
I now await life's setting sun.

\* \* \* \* \*



JANUARY 19, 1953

Eighty-five years ago tonight -  
Just as the sun passed out of sight,  
To my dear parents was born a son,  
My troubled life had then begun.

My parents raised me with much care,  
Their efforts strengthened with much prayer,  
There hardly ever was a day  
That they forgot for me to pray,

They often had to discipline  
To break this stubborn will of mine.  
The will of God they daily taught,  
And for my welfare only sought.

To manhood I thus quickly grew,  
Was taught just what I had to do  
To gain respect of God and man,  
My early training thus began.

My youthful years soon passed away,  
Enjoyed my life both night and day,  
Thus quickly I, to manhood grown,  
Found 'twas not good to be alone.

My thoughts turned now to seek a wife  
To go with me throughout my life.  
The Lord was good and led me on,  
And soon a jewel I had won.

A gem indeed she proved to be;  
The better half of us was she.  
She never said an unkind word,  
Rebuking words I never heard.

With respectful children we were blest;  
Their Mother always did her best  
To teach them truth and righteousness,  
The source of all true happiness.

At twenty-six the Lord did choose  
This humble servant for His use.  
That I His gospel should proclaim  
And preach salvation in His name.

A bishop's cares were placed on me  
Just at the age of thirty-three.  
My jewel mate - my helpful wife--  
Stood by me well through toils of life.

But then there came a fateful day;  
God took my faithful wife away;  
I never thought that I could live,  
If I my wife would have to give.

I never thought that I could bear,  
Thought I would sink in sad despair,  
If God should choose to take my wife,  
And leave me alone to live my life.

But then the Lord was good to me,  
And finally I could plainly see  
That she was in a blessed state  
While I was struggling in my fate.

He gave me then another wife  
To brighten my thus darkened life.  
Another jewel He has given  
To brighten up my way to Heaven.

Stepmother true she proves to be,  
Respected and respectful she  
Is to my children every one,  
As she is to her only son.

And thus we two now journey on--  
The children married--all are gone.  
We two in peace live day by day,  
Till God through death takes us away.

Eli J. Bontreger

#### COMING HOME

For several weeks now we're at home,  
We through a mountain road have come;  
And on the highway met a bear,  
Who for some food was waiting there.

And then to him was thrown some bread.  
He left the road when he was fed,  
And we proceeded on our way,  
Arrived at home at noon next day.

We found at home much work to do.  
Yes, lots of work and various too.  
My failing eyesight hinders me,  
I cannot very helpful be.

But then the Lord was good to me  
And blest me most abundantly.  
We thank Him for all blessings given  
And for a promised home in Heaven.

Eli J. Bontreger

June, 1955

TOURISTS IN FLORIDA

1. We are again in Florida,  
From home a thousand miles away  
We like the pleasant sunshine here  
And the religious atmosphere.
2. The tourists come still more and more;  
Some that we never saw before.  
They from about all states appear;  
We're glad to meet each other here.
3. Most Mennonites to Pinecraft come,  
And here they have their Winter home.  
Most of us come for rest and ease,  
Or find relief from some disease.
4. In Pinecraft some hundreds are,  
Most of them Mennonite by far;  
Old Mennonites we mostly find;  
Old Amish are not far behind.
5. Of other groups some also come  
And preach here as they do at home;  
And preachers from all groups appear  
To preach salvation for us here.
6. All preaching here is sound and pure;  
The gospel doctrines that are sure.  
The word of God is always preached;  
Thus sinners' hearts and souls are reached.
7. At Pinecraft church the plainer set  
Attend, Christ's teachings here to get.  
Those who like a more modern trend  
The other churches will attend.
8. Most German preaching still is done  
In Yoder's house, though he is gone.  
He built it for our brethren's use,  
Whenever they, to do so, choose.

Eli J. Bontrager

Sarasota, Florida  
December 6, 1954

TRUST

1. My end of life is near at hand;  
Then on the other side I'll stand.  
I'll then before the Judge appear  
Who knows so well how I lived here.
2. From early life until this day  
I've staggered oft from the right of way  
In thoughts and words and action, too,  
I've done what I should never do.
3. I know the good that I have done  
Has not with God His favor won.  
Within myself there's nothing good,  
For I've not done all that I should.
4. As I look back, I now can see  
Where God has been so good to me.  
He loved me though I oft went 'stray  
And wandered off from the right way.
5. So as I'm nearing now my end,  
I've nothing on which to depend,  
Except the Grace of God alone,  
And what the Christ, His Son, has done.
6. He bore my sins upon the cross;  
He took along the scum and dross,  
And pleads before the Judge my case,  
And pleads that He my guilt erase.
7. So, though my sins I can't forget,  
And all mistakes I much regret,  
I cannot for mistakes atone;  
My Saviour can, and He alone.
8. I, on the Grace of God depend,  
He'll see me through unto the end.  
And take me to that home of His,  
There to enjoy eternal bliss.

Eli J. Bontrager

Sarasota, Florida  
January 22, 1955



THE FIRST PSALM

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

- (1)  
Blessed is the godly man  
Who walks in no ungodly plan,  
Who standeth not with sinners here,  
With scornful never does appear.
- (2)  
Who in his law has his delight  
And tells about it day and night,  
For he is not unlike a tree  
On river bank we planted see.
- (3)  
In season he good fruit does bear;  
He withers not--there's moisture there;  
For such a man here will succeed,  
And he will prosper thus indeed.
- (4)  
The ungodly, then, cannot stay;  
The wind, like chaff blows them away;  
Thus the ungodly cannot stand  
In judgment what God does demand.
- (5)  
For sinners with their evil heart  
Must then from righteous ones depart;  
The Lord knoweth the righteous way;  
The ungodly perish in that day.

- (1)  
The Lord is my shepherd indeed;  
So I shall have no want or need,  
He lets me in green pastures rest  
And gives me water of the best.
- (2)  
Which flows so still along my side  
And he restores my soul--all right,  
He leadeth me for his name's sake,  
That I the righteous path will take.
- (3)  
And though I do in death's vale appear,  
No evil will I ever fear;  
For then with me will ever be  
Thy rod and staff to comfort me.
- (4)  
Thou hast for me a table spread;  
Before my enemies I am fed;  
My head anointing, Thou hast done;  
My cup is full and overrun.
- (5)  
So goodness is with me always,  
And mercy follows all my days;  
To God's house there will entrance gain;  
And forever there I will remain.

Eli J. Bontreger

C h r i s t m a s   D a y

- 1) We celebrate the birth today  
Of Christ who brought to us the way;  
That everyone upon this earth  
Could serve our God in a New Birth
- 2) For God so loved the World that he  
So freely gave this Son to be  
A sacrifice for sins we've done  
And bring us peace through Christ, the Son.
- 3) We cast our sins upon the Christ,  
Who for our sins has sacrificed  
His life, and paid the penalty,  
And from sin's guilt has made us free.
- 4) He was to Jews a new-born King;  
To all of us He came to bring  
His peace on earth, good will to man,  
According to His Father's plan.
- 5) So let us sing our praise to God,  
Who full salvation thus has brought,  
And serve Him well through all our days,  
And thank Him for His saving Grace.

Eli J. Bontreger

PSALM 90

1. O, Lord, our God, thou art the place  
Where things have dwelt through all these  
days,  
Before the mountains were brought forth  
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth.
  2. Thou has been God through ages past;  
Thou wilt be God while time will last.  
They here must die and buried be,  
When thou then dost say; "Return to me."
  3. A thousand years are in thy sight  
Just as a watch is of the night;  
To Thee appear a thousand years  
Just as to us a day appears.
  4. Thou takest them as through a stream;  
Their life is like a sleep or dream.  
It's like a grass upon the field  
That will to every person yield.
  5. The grass will flourish through the day;  
At night it is cut down for hay;  
Thine anger has consumed us folks,  
Thy wrath it troubles and provokes.
  6. Our sins, also our wrongful ways.  
Are all before his shining face.  
All secret sins are brought to light,  
When they come to thy face so bright.
  7. For in Thy wrath our days are passed;  
Just as a Sigh they will not last.  
At seventy our end appears  
By strength it may be eighty years.
  8. And if these years of value be,  
They will not be of trouble free.  
With sorrow filled most every day,  
Thou cut'st us off, we fly away.
  9. Who knows the strength Thy anger has  
Or when Thy wrath or fear will pass.  
So teach us, Lord, that we must die  
Our hearts to wisdom thus apply.
  10. Return, O Lord, and give us grace  
To repent and then to help us mend our  
ways.  
With mercy may'st Thou satisfy,  
And we'll rejoice until we die.
  11. Afflictions come in many ways,  
Now make us glad through future days.  
The evil years that we have had,  
Give us glad days for those so sad.
  12. May now Thy work to us appear;  
Thy glory be our children's cheer;  
So let the beauty of the Lord  
Rest upon us through the Word.
  13. Lord, let us know all thy commands,  
And bless the work of our weak hands.  
Lord, help us be what we profess,  
And wilt thou Lord, our labors bless.
- April 8, 1955

The Past and Present

- 1) I'm getting old and feeble now  
And can do work no more.  
I've worked with sweat upon my brow  
And muscles that were sore.
- 2) I liked to work and till the soil  
And sow the seed in spring,  
Then later with some more hard toil  
The harvest in to bring.
- 3) But now I'm old, with failing sight  
My strength is failing too  
Can only see with bright sunlight;  
There's little I can do.
- 4) I am quite well and have no pain  
I seldom have been sick  
Don't know how long I'll so remain,  
As changes can come quick.

March 1955

Eli J. Bontrager



# GROWING OLD

I'm growing old, or so they say,  
But I'm not growing old  
It's true that this old House of Clay  
Will soon begin to mold.  
I find fresh truths most every day  
And read what wise men had to say  
So I'm not growing old.

\* \* \* \* \*

It's true that I will before long  
Lay this old clay aside.  
I then will join the Holy throng  
And there with them abide.  
There I shall live a life of bliss,  
Which will be better far than this,  
And lay all cares aside.

\* \* \* \* \*

My life will be continued there  
Without me growing old.  
No burdens there, or any care  
Will there for me unfold.  
All troubles there have come to end,  
All efforts there shall only tend,  
God's glory to uphold.

\* \* \* \* \*

So really my life is renewed,  
While in this clay I roam;  
On God's word I rely for food,  
Till I'll be taken home.  
My life will then extended be  
To live with Him eternally,  
When He to me says, "Come!"

\* \* \* \* \*

As Jesus says, eternal life  
Have those who will obey,  
For those who will for His will strive  
And follow all the way.  
So this life here is but the youth  
Of those who follow in His truth  
And live it day by day.

\* \* \* \* \*

So only those are growing old  
Whose lives but failures list,  
Who only Satan's works uphold  
And God's word here resist.  
For life here stops with the last breath  
No life there but eternal death.  
Though their souls still exist.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so I say I still am young,  
Though old this mortal clay.  
Eternal life has just begun,  
And I'm now on the way  
To those fair realms on yonder strand,  
Where I expect 'ere long to land,  
With Christ for'ever to stay.

Eli J. Bontreger

January 1954

MY YOUTHFUL DAYS

1. The time I've lived seems long to some,  
But I through all these years have come;  
As I reflect upon those years,  
The time quite short to me appears.
2. My younger years were full of joys  
With playmates played both girls and  
boys;  
I had nice schoolmates, too, in school,  
Where we all learned the Golden Rule.
3. As I know think of those school days,  
I now recall the different ways  
Through which we came to later life;  
Some lived in peace and some in strife.
4. I was the only preacher's son;  
As preacher I'm the only one.  
One was a railroad engineer,  
Two ran steam threshing engines here.
5. One went to live in Oregon;  
As teacher he some fame has won;  
For Governor he tried to run  
But not the nomination won.
6. Most of them lived upon a farm,  
Lived quiet lives--did no one harm.  
Some all their lives worked by the day  
And made no gain in any way.
7. Two of them served time in the pen  
For breaking laws of God and men;  
Some scattered through the land now be,  
Their whereabouts unknown to me.
8. The girls were lately farmer's wives,  
And thus lived quiet and useful lives.  
And two are nearly ninety now  
And carry wrinkles on their brow.
9. Of all my schoolmates I know five  
Who at this time are still alive.  
Some died while young, some suddenly;  
Some lingered long, died miserably.
10. The time is now quite near at hand,  
When I will reach my journey's end.  
By God's grace then I hope to be  
With Him through all Eternity.

GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

1. My work on earth is nearly done;  
My eyesight now is partly gone;  
My health and strength are fairly  
good,  
But can't do what I really should.
2. I can hardly see to drive a nail;  
I cannot read my daily mail.  
I have to watch where're I go,  
Which causes me to go quite slow.
3. I'm nearly laid upon the shelf,  
But still can fairly care for self.  
Inside I cannot see to read,  
But find my way upon the street.
4. I occupy the rocking chair  
And thank God for his loving care.  
Recall that God was good to me  
And blessed me most abundantly.
5. For more than eighty years I've had  
Good eyes that never once went bad;  
I always had good books to read;  
My eyes have served me well indeed.
6. My memory fails; I can't well hear,  
My mind, they say, now still is clear.  
So I could still quite active be,  
If only I could better see.
7. I'm thankful for God's grace to me;  
I'm grateful that I long could see.  
I humbly to His will submit;  
I know it's right as He sees fit.
8. If I shall wholly lose my sight,  
I still can see just what is right;  
I'll serve Him my remaining days  
And thank Him for unbounded grace.

June 9, 1954

Eli J. Bontrager  
Shipshewana, Indiana

June 10, 1954 Eli J. Bontrager  
Shipshewana, Indiana



A TOKEN OF LOVE TO THE CHILDREN OF THE KINDERNOOK  
KINDERGARTEN, SARASOTA. 1954-1955

1. I am not the Santa Claus;  
I give you candy just because  
I love nice little girls and boys  
And like to hear their cheery voice.
2. I was raised a farmer's son;  
All kinds of farm work I have done.  
I liked the work that farmers do;  
So I became a farmer, too.
3. I also was a preacher's son,  
And I a pastor's work have done;  
I've baptized many girls and boys,  
So they may, too, in Christ rejoice.
4. I've preached about three thousand times;  
I've written some prose and also rhymes.  
My work on earth is nearly done;  
My eyesight now is nearly gone.
5. So little ones be always true;  
My Christ protect and bless you, too.  
Goodbye to you from Grandpa Santa,  
And goodbye, too, from Aunt Amanda.

Eli J. Bontreger, Age 87  
Shipshewana, Indiana

711 South Palm Avenue,  
Sarasota, Florida

H O M E

by Leon Jay Stutzman

- - - - -

Yes, our home is the place  
Where our father and our mother  
Their love ever shared  
With us and each other.

We appreciated not  
What home really is  
Till the time has come  
When mother we'll miss.

Her tender loving care  
She on us bestowed,  
When we were young and weak;  
She always helped us so.

But when you're alone,  
And mother is not there  
To help you with your tasks  
And your problems to share.

Then you think of your home  
How you loved each other  
And wished you were there  
With father and with mother.

You will miss your father too  
Who answered all your questions,  
And kindly showed you how,  
With much love and patience.

Our home just would not be  
What it now has to show,  
If father were not there  
To keep things on the go.

Your brothers too, you'll miss,  
When happenings there will be,  
And no brother there to tell  
Just what you hear and see.

And even though sometimes  
A quarrel would begin,  
It's done and soon forgotten,  
And all is love again.

Yes, all this you will miss,  
When you begin to roam,  
And think of the many things  
You have enjoyed at home.



## WEDDING INVOCATION

O Father, source of righteousness,  
Do Thou in truth our union bless;  
Help us in Thee our lives to blend  
In godly fear unto the end.

As cares of life to us shall come,  
May ours still be a godly home.

Help that our lives from sin be free  
Unto the end through faith in Thee.

Our Father, as the cares oppress,  
O do Thou still our union bless;  
And as our burdens we may bear,  
So also joys together share.

Help us in Thee our joy to feel,  
As daily at Thy feet we kneel.

And constantly our mem'ries fill  
With the desire to know Thy will.

Help us to know that all our need  
Is met as on Thy word we feed.

On may our lives be close to Thee,  
Both now and in eternity.

Composed on May 20, 1945, by M. E. Bontreger;  
Presented to Vernon and Miriam Bontreger.  
Music supplied was composed by Galen Johns.

### Mein mangelhaftes Leben

1. Ich hab' gelebt ein' lange Zeit  
Und suchte immer nach Weisheit.  
Ich wollte Gottes Wort versteh'n  
Und nur auf Gottes Wegen geh'n.
2. Ich weiss was "neugeboren" meint:  
Das wir dann abgesagt dem Feind;  
Das Fleisch die Herrschaft nicht mehr hat;  
Der Geist ist Führer in der Tat.
3. So viele Jahre sind jetzt hin  
Seitdem, dass ich getaufet bin.  
In dieser Zeit so manche Jahr  
War ich auch oft in mancher G'fahr.
4. Nach meinem Sinn und Pauli Lehr'  
Der Geist im Kampf der Sieger wär'.  
Zu oft gewinnt das Fleisch den Sieg;  
Der Geist betrübt dann unterliegt.
5. Mit andern hab' ich oft bekennt  
Dass wer den Namen Christi nennt,  
Der soll jetzt neugeboren sein,  
Vol allen Sünden frei und rein.
6. Aus Römer sieben sollt er sein,  
Und sich in Römer acht erfreu'n.  
Fand mich in Römer sieben oft  
Da ich im achten sein gehofft.
7. Ich fand, dass mit dem besten Willen  
Um Gottes Wort stets zu erfüllen,  
So hat das Fleisch zu oft den Sieg,  
Und ich dem Feinde unterlieg'.
8. Hab' oft getan in meiner Zeit  
Was helfen soll zur Ewigkeit  
Doch bau'ich nur auf Gnad' allein;  
Durch Gnad' macht Er von Süden rein.
9. Durch Christi Blut und Kreuzes Tod,  
Sein grosse Pein und schwere Not,  
Das nimmt Gott an als Straf' für mich,  
Und Er nimmt meine Schuld auf sich.
10. Wenn ich's bedenk's, so fällt es schwer  
Dass meine Sünd' die Ursach wär,  
Dass er so schwer gelitten hat,  
Gelitten - ja, an meiner Statt.

- 1) My life on earth is nearly gone;  
My race of life is nearly run;  
The Lord was very good to me  
And blessed me most abundantly.
- 2) My friends have always been so good;  
I would repay them if I could.  
So I say: "Thank you" everyone  
For all the good to me you've done.
- 3) My loving wife took care of me  
When I no more could plainly see.  
I thank her for each deed of love;  
May she be blessed from Heav'n above.
- 4) My children too were always good  
And treated me as children should.  
I thank you all with grateful heart.  
May God to all His Grace impart.

July 16, 1955  
(My last poem)

Eli J. Bontreger

SOME CONUNDRUMS

1. God made Adam out of dust,  
But thought it best to make me first;  
So I was made before the man  
According to God's Holy plan.  
But God in me did something see  
And put a living soul in me,  
A sin in me the Lord did claim  
And took from me the soul again.  
Now, without legs or arms or soul,  
I travel now from pole to pole.
2. Five hundred before, five hundred behind,  
And five in the middle is seen.  
The first of all letters and the first  
of all figures  
Fill up the spaces between.
3. Just start with fifty or five hundred  
And then a pronoun, fifty P.  
Then twice five hundred "E"  
The answer then as you will see  
An S.O.S. call will be.

E.J.B.

1. Since b-o-u-g-h spells bow,  
Why doesn't c-o-u-g-h spell cow?  
If c-o-u-g-h is coff,  
Why isn't d-o-u-g-h called doff?
2. Since d-o-u-g-h spells do,  
Why doesn't r-o-u-g-h spell ro?  
Since r-o-u-g-h spells ruff,  
And t-o-u-g-h is tuff,
3. Why isn't w-r-o-u-g-h-t called ruft,  
And t-h-o-u-g-h-t called thuft?  
S-l-o-u-g-h is pronounced slu  
And then again is called sluff, too.
4. Since l-a-u-g-h is pronounced laff,  
Why doesn't c-a-u-g-h spell calff?  
If "gh" we would here remove,  
Our spelling we would much improve.
5. If S-i-o-u-x spells Soo,  
Then T-i-o-u-x should spell too;  
And b-e-a-u is pronounced bo,  
Then geau should say Go.
6. As Ph-th-o-l-o  
g-n-y-r-r-h, we know,  
Spells Turner -- 'tis another reason why  
Our spelling we should simplify.

E.J.B.



THREE TRIPS TO THE TURTLE MOUNTAINS IN NOVEMBER AND  
DECEMBER 1896 FOR WOOD FOR FUEL.

THE FIRST TRIP

We moved to North Dakota in the Spring of 1895, arriving there on April 6. There were eight families of us Amish among many others, mostly of the Church of the Brethren, or Dunkard Church. There were four Amish families that moved there the Spring before.

The Winter of 1896 came early. On November 2, thirteen men and twelve teams and wagons went to the Turtle Mountains for firewood. All dead trees and poles were free to settlers; so we took advantage of this opportunity to get our fuel free. We started early and got to the woods in good time and loaded our wagons before dark. This was some over thirty miles from our homes.

Just before dark it started to snow. We had brought blankets and quilts for bedding, but found it necessary to blanket our teams, and so we sat around our fire all night, except when we had to go and gather up fuel for our fire. The snow came thick and fast, and after sitting still for a couple of hours we were pretty well covered with snow. When morning finally came we found that we had enough wood to load all of us, as it was going to be rather hard hauling with six inches of snow. Some had quite large loads in the evening while some did not have full loads; so we divided up among us. We started home early and reached our homes, some 30 miles away, in good time.

That was one pretty tough trip, but not the worst experience we had in getting wood in the Turtle Mountains.

THE SECOND TRIP

Several weeks later four of us again went to the woods for fuel. We had four teams, but only two sleds. One was a borrowed one, and the other a homemade one. Because of the early snow and cold weather, dealers had not stocked up with sleds and the settlers had but very few. The first snow fell on November 2, and lasted, with good sledding, until April 2, five months. We entered the woods on this second trip at about the same place where we went in several weeks before. We had put up the night before with a family of our people that lived about midway between us and the mountains that winter.

We put on fairly good loads, but as we passed a wood yard just outside of the woods, we decided that we could haul bigger loads out on the prairie, so we stopped and bought some wood and had real loads when we left the wood dealer. So we started again for our half-way house to stop for the night. However, when we were about one mile from the place, the first sled stopped on the top of a knoll. We went around them and then went on. They soon followed with their teams, but left the load. It was dark by this time. So the next morning they went out early and found that they had to unload and fix this homemade sled. We, however, got started quite early and went about five miles when our load tipped over. We had to unload entirely and straighten out our sled and reload. The other two helped us after chiding us a bit for being so careless. When we were ready to start, they broke this homemade sled again and so we had to unload their load and then found their sled broken beyond repair with what tools we had. We managed to put a half dozen poles on the bolsters and were ready to start again. It was some 20 or 30 degrees below zero, our sled was frozen fast, and, when we started our team, the tongue tore out of the side;

so we were left again, and each of us put our blankets on our horses and got on a horse's back and started for home. It was storming again and late by that time; so we went on home without stopping to feed or eat.

We went on and reached our house about an hour after dark with a half dozen poles after four of us with four teams were out three full days. That was our toughest trip.

### THE THIRD TRIP

However, two weeks later two of us went again to the same place for wood with two teams and one sled. The second day out we loaded our sled and started out of the woods in good time, but before reaching the prairie we upset our load and rolled it down a hillside. We reloaded, and by the time we were ready to start it was dark and still bitter cold, and we were several miles from the prairie.

After driving some distance we passed an Indian hut, and I went in to inquire if we were on the right road to the Mission. This is a Catholic Mission. They told me we were on the right road and about a mile from the Mission. We went on again for several miles and then stopped at another Indian shack and asked how far it was to the Mission. They said about three miles. I asked if this was the right road to the Mission. They said it was, so we went on again, and after going for some distance we recognized the road as one on which we had been several weeks before, and that we were going the wrong direction--that we were going West instead of East as we meant to go. We were on the right road as the Indian had said but were going in the wrong direction. They could not see which way we were headed in the dark night. We then had to go on for some distance before we could turn around with our four-horse team in the deep snow, So we turned around and then went on to our stopping place, our half-way house. It was about 30 degrees below zero, and one of us watched while the other drove the teams. About midnight we arrived at our lodging place.

The next day we got home without further incident. These three trips were made in about six week's time from November 2 to about December 15, 1896. This sleighing lasted for five months to the day, and this November was the stormiest and coldest month of the winter, although March, 1897, was nearly as stormy and cold.

Eli J. Bontrager - Age 86  
July 9, 1954



## A SHORT SKETCH OF MY EXPERIENCE AS A MINISTER

On May 13th, 1894, I was chosen by lot and ordained as minister of the Gospel by our Bishop, David S. Kaufman. Bishop Kaufman was then 58 years old and had been bishop for seventeen years. He lived to be nearly 84 years old. At the age of 73 he ordained Joseph E. Mast as his successor as bishop of the North Barrens district of the Old Order Amish congregation in Lagrange County, Indiana. Mast was then not very many years younger than Kaufman and physically not as healthy and no stronger than Bishop Kaufman was. Bishop David S. Kaufman was born in 1834 and died in 1918. He was without any doubt the most successful of all the old bishops that lived in his time. He never needed any outside ministerial help in his district because of any disturbances in the congregation and never missed having communion twice every year with a united and peaceful congregation. He was more often called upon to help along in other districts with their church troubles than any other bishop of his time. There were, of course, not near as many settlements of our people at that time as there were later on or at the present time. Andrew J. Mast of Arthur, Illinois was later on called upon more often and to more different districts to help settle church difficulties. Bishop Mast was ordained as bishop when he was quite young and his help was solicited and appreciated during his years as bishop. He died some years ago. He served more districts and churches in such matters than I. We were often called to help settle church troubles together. Others were also called with us, but no one else as often as we were.

After I was eighty years old I refused to answer such calls. I have now (November, 1954) been in the ministry sixty years and Bishop over fifty-three years. I have lived in three different states and localities. In North Dakota where I was ordained bishop in 1901, we lived until the fall of 1910. Then we lived for six years in Wisconsin and now for more than thirty-eight years in Indiana again, where I was first ordained. I also had at different times Bishop oversight of eight or ten other districts that were without resident bishops. In all those districts we have never failed in having communion twice each year and have never had any church difficulties in any district that required the assistance of other ministers or bishops. I have always been reasonable in resolutions and plans and proposals and always had a brotherhood that was reasonable and could see through reasonable proposals, and we could always agree on any matters that came up. Our settlement in North Dakota was started with members from six different states and ten different settlements and with about that many different modes and ways of church administrations, but with David Kaufman as bishop to help us along the first six years, we never had any difficulties.

We had several rather unruly members at times, but they never succeeded in bringing disturbance among the ministry or the congregation. Bishop David Kaufman's ways of working and handling all Church matters always worked harmony and peace. I am the only bishop left that grew up under his administration, and I do not think that there is another bishop in this locality that follows Kaufman's mode of procedure at this time. There are many church difficulties in different districts that would not exist if our old bishop's ways were followed. This unity and peace in our district seems to cause some envy among some others and they try to find fault with me and our church because we do not accept all of the ideas that are without scripture and only cause friction.

On May 11, 1952 I ordained David B. Helmuth as Bishop to take care of our church district in my declining years. My eyesight is failing and we expect to be away from home a good part of the time, especially during the Winter. We expect to spend about 5 months in Florida as this cold weather in winter time is rather hard on both of us. Bishop Helmuth seems to be getting along fine with our congregation, and I hope he may continue to do so. He is seventy-seven years old, but may be able to serve the church for some years. So I am a retired minister and bishop and feel that my days of usefulness are about gone. My eyesight and hearing are failing and my

gait is getting more faltering and uncertain. May the good Lord continue to bless me and carry me through my later years with a continued strong faith in God and His Son, my Saviour, Jesus Christ, in whom I trust for my salvation.

Eli J. Bontrager



# ANOTHER BIRTHDAY

# THE HYMN OF PRAISE

1. I'm eighty-eight years old today,  
Am still a traveler on the way;  
From time unto eternity  
The Lord has been so good to me.
2. He brought me through some trying days  
And led me with sustaining grace;  
I cannot thank Him as I should,  
Can't thank Him as I wish I could.
3. Was brought up in a Christian way,  
Was taught what's right, and how to pray.  
I wished to lead a godly life,  
But flesh and spirit had a strife.
4. But flesh too oft the victory won,  
My best intentions were undone;  
O wretched boy that I was then,  
My good intentions failed again.
5. And so has been my entire life;  
My flesh has been too much alive,  
And, when I thought it was subdued,  
It showed itself with strength renewed.
6. So here I am quite an old man,  
Have labored much in my life's span,  
Find nothing good about myself  
As I am laid upon the shelf.
7. My hope now for eternal bliss  
And life beyond the grave is this,  
That Christ has died and bled for me,  
Has suffered death to make me free.
8. My sins were on my Savior thrown,  
He carried them, though not His own,  
Hung on the cross and suffered pain  
To make me free from guilt again.
9. I now regret with bitter tears  
Where I have failed in all these years,  
And now rely upon His grace,  
And hope to meet Him face to face.
10. Had Christ not come and died for me,  
Where then would this poor servant be?  
All who repent, on grace rely,  
Will see their Savior by and by.

- (1) O, Father God we worship thee  
Thy goodness we are praising,  
Which Thou O Lord so graciously  
On us again art placing.  
And brought us now together Lord  
To teach us here thy blessed Word  
Give grace for what we're facing.
- (2) Thy servant's mouth do open Lord  
Give wisdom as he preaches,  
That he may truly preach thy Word,  
And tell us what it teaches.  
And needful is to give thee praise.  
Give us desire for needed grace  
We trust thy Grace will reach us.
- (3) To our hearts good sense bestow  
On earth us here enlighten,  
That we thy Word may fully know  
And our lives does brighten.  
And ever live in righteousness  
And always do as thy Word says,  
Our trust in thee thus widen.
- (4) Thy Kingdom Lord is thine alone,  
All might on earth and heaven;  
We worship Thee upon thy Throne.  
Thanks to thy Name be given.  
And it is now our heart's desire  
That Thou wilt come to us this hour  
Through Lord Christ Jesus, Amen.

Dec. 31, 1956

# THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who in heaven art  
Thy name be hallowed in every heart,  
Thy Kingdom come, to us appear  
Thy will be done on earth down here  
As those in Heaven Thee obey,  
Give us our daily bread today.  
Forgive us our debts as we  
Forgive those who our debtors be  
Lead us not in temptations ways  
Deliver us from evil days,  
For thine the Kingdom's Power be  
And Glory in eternity.

AMEN.

Jan. 19, 1956

# ALT UND LEBENSSATT

# A PARTING HYMN

1. Bin neun und achtzig Jahre alt,  
Mein Ende wird auch kommen bald;  
Der Herr ist noch mein guter Hirt,  
Daher mir gar nichts mangeln wird.
2. Nur Kurz war meine Jugend Zeit;  
Der Herr geb mir auch Freud and Leid;  
Auf grüner Aue weide ich,  
Mit frischem Wasser trinkt er mich.
3. Ich habe viel und hart geschafft,  
Der Herr gab mir dazu die Kraft;  
Erquicket hat er mir die Seel,  
Und führte mich nach sein'm Befehl.
4. Und wenn's auch dunkel um mich war,  
So führt der Herr nach Christi Lehr;  
Und ob das Thal auch finster ist,  
Ich fürcht mich nicht weil du da bist.
5. Gott mich auch wohl gestrafet hat,  
Dann wieder mir viel Gutes that;  
Mit Stab und Stecken strakst du mich,  
Dann vor den Feinden esse ich.
6. Gott hat mir sehr viel Gut's gethan  
Bis jetzt von meiner Jugend an,  
Mein Haupt mit Oel gesalbt hast du,  
Und schenkest mir voll ein dazu.
7. Ich bau auf Gottes Gnad allein,  
Er werd ein gnad'ger Richter sein;  
Viel Gutes und Barmherzigkeit  
Mir folgen werden allezeit.
8. So hoffe ich des Himmel's Thür  
Wird sich aufmachen auch vor mir;  
Ich komme dann in's Herren Haus,  
Und komme nimmermehr heraus.

January, 1957

(1)

Now praise God this work is done,  
Preaching, hearing, praying, singing;  
God again His love has shown;  
Now to Him we praises are bringing;  
Praise be to God who with us met  
And with His Word us richly fed.

(2)

When our meeting's end has come,  
And the blessing's to us given,  
Then in peace we all go home,  
Traveling on our way to heaven;  
Now may His Spirit be our guide  
And lead us on the way that's right.

(3)

God has blest us as we met;  
Bless us all now as we depart;  
Bless to us our daily bread;  
Bless the plans of every heart;  
Grant that we all for death prepare;  
Make each of us an heavenly heir.

April 24, 1957

## MEIN LEBENS ABEND

1. Ich bin schon alt and lebensatt;  
Mein Körper ist schon abgematt;  
Bin fertig jetzt mit dieser welt,  
Und geh den Weg wie's Gott gefällt.
2. Bin etwas schwach and auch schon al  
Mein Ende wird auch kommen bald;  
Dann komme ich vor Gottes Thron  
Zu Gott dem Vater und dem Sohn.
3. Ich bau auf Gottes Gnad allein;  
Er wird ein gnädiger Richter sein;  
Ich habe keine Gnad verdient;  
Bei mir zu wenig Gut's sich findt.
4. Ich trau and bau auf Jesu Tod,  
Der mich errettet aus der Not;  
O wenn es nicht für Gnade wär,  
Wär Trost und Hoffnung auch nicht m

June 26, 1957



MY LATEST DAYS

1. I never yet used couch or bed  
To rest or sleep by day;  
I use my rocking chair instead  
And get my rest that way.
2. My strength I feel is leaving me,  
Infirmities come on;  
I am up and go where I can see,  
But then my work is done.
3. On cold days I cannot be out,  
For I am soon chilled through;  
On cold days I don't move about,  
There's nothing I can do.
4. My eyesight now is leaving me,  
My left eye is quite blind;  
God grant just what is good for me;  
He always was so kind.
5. My mind I think is still quite clear;  
My memory is not bad;  
Ideas still as truth appear,  
Such as I always had.
6. I hope I may submissive be,  
Submit to God and friends;  
What's best I may not always see;  
Trust I'll cause no offence.
7. I hope my funeral day is near,  
When I'll be called to come,  
And then with holy saints appear  
In that eternal HOME.

May 30, 1957

THE EVENING OF MY LIFE

1. I now am old and tired of life,  
Suppose my end is near;  
My faith in God is still alive;  
His promises are dear.
2. I aimed to shun all that is bad,  
The Lord's true servant be;  
Worst enemy I ever had  
Was just myself and me.
3. Mistakes too often I have made  
In this long life of mine,  
Results of which showed up too late  
To bring things back in line.
4. I never hated anyone  
And seldom had a foe;  
And none to me much harm has done;  
Few to me hate did show.
5. I suffered some financial loss,  
And I can plainly see  
Me and myself the only cause,  
No one to blame but me.
6. With talents that the Lord gave me,  
And father me had taught,  
A better pilgrim I should be,  
With not an evil thought.
7. This foe and enemy of mine  
My mortal body is;  
It would the good and bad combine,  
And thus salvation miss.
8. This old man daily goes with me,  
Is all my troubles cause;  
I should from him have made me free  
And saved me all this loss.

July 10, 1957

ONLY REMEMBERED

By J. C. Wenger

(From Gospel Herald, September 1, 1959)

An old Gospel song reminds us that we will be remembered only by what we have done. How true this is, and yet how few people give it any thought! What would we like to be remembered for? Would it be profitable for each of us to make up a list for ourselves? Might it perhaps be the means of changing our behavior in certain areas of our life? Here are a few attitudes and deeds that will perhaps speak to some hearts:

1. We ought to be remembered as persons who earnestly sought to please the Lord. Our aim was not to "get by," as far as the church and its ministry were concerned. Rather, we lived our life as unto Christ. We sincerely tried to direct our steps in terms of what we believed His will to be. This will we tried to discern in the only way there is to discover it (the Bible).

2. We also ought to be remembered by the way we searched His Word, read it, meditated upon it, "fed" upon it. Our family should be accustomed to seeing us bending over the Bible, searching its counsels for our spiritual profit and direction.

3. We ought to be remembered for our concern for the church: for its purity, for its unity, for its prosperity and growth, for its obedience. We should be men and women of prayer, who cry unto the Lord for the blessings of heaven to rest upon the shepherds of the flock, and for all who labor in the fold.

4. We should be remembered for the way we tried always to say the best about our friends and acquaintances. We always tried to stop gossip, tried to believe the best about people. When they failed, we prayed for them, and hoped that they would repent and quickly find the right way again. We never tramped on people when they were down.

5. With the help of the Lord we tried to carry whatever assignments the church gave to us: this we want to be remembered for. We did not want to belong to the little band who thought it easier to criticize others than to put our own shoulder to the wheel.

6. We want to be remembered as those who had confidence in our young people. We never quite forgot how we appreciated those who loved and trusted us. We know how much such a warm attitude helped us through the struggles and adjustments of maturing, and we want to help the next generation as others helped us. So we had patience and understanding when their behavior seemed trying or reckless.

7. We want to be remembered as those who looked on the bright side because of the faith and confidence that Christ would be faithful to His own. He always sustains and strengthens His disciples, and carries their cares if they permit it. The future of the church is therefore certain.

These are a few of the thoughts that came to me after reading in the LIFE STORY of that saintly man of God, Amish Bishop Eli J. Bontreger (1868-1958), a Christian who will long be remembered for the above qualities.



ELI J. BONTREGER, A Minister of the Gospel in the old order  
Amish Mennonite Church for over sixty-three years

On Sunday evening, as the sun was setting, January 19, 1868, Eli J. Bontreger was born. His parents were John and Barbara (Mishler) Bontreger. In his "Life Story" to which we may refer at times, he said; "O, That I might ever after have been kept as pure and sinless as I was on that Sunday night. Under the tender care of his parents, he went, as many another, through the trying experiences of childhood diseases, such as: measles, whooping cough, etc. escaping mumps until after he was fifty-one years old. Quoting again; "No doubt that sinful human nature manifested itself in my early years and caused my parents many heartaches even before the age of accountability. They, however, believed in discipline, and I, no doubt, was subject to many reproofs and chastenings with words and with the rod - - - I can well remember, what, however, I would rather forget, how later on I resented their reproving at times. Although I knew in my heart that they were right, I did not want to admit it. I did know and realize at that time that I had a wiser and more intelligent and better educated father than the majority of the boys had. He took great pains to teach us the German language and to read the Bible - - - It always was easy for me to memorize anything that I wished to "learn by heart" as we used to say. Father encouraged me in memorizing scriptures and songs and other Christian poems, etc. At his suggestion I memorized Romans 8, Luke 2, and Acts 5, each chapter in two days time. Also Psalms 1, 9, and 146 were memorized then, and most of these have remained in my memory up to this time. I am not boasting; I am simply saying what can be accomplished when one has a God-given gift of learning and remembering, and the will to use it, plus a father who knows how to teach and encourage boys."

In his early boyhood father was always taught to work and how to make time bring its rewards by faithful application and wise planning. He says when he was a boy they always raised cane and it was his job to strip cane in season.

He started to school at the age of six and liked school. His favorite subject was arithmetic. In this he excelled and long remembered how as a boy of eleven he was in the same class with grown men. After he was eleven years old his teacher gave him a "White's Intermediate Geography," an item his father had refused to get him. That and a Grammar he still had in his late years. A book he prized highly was given him by one of his teachers, entitled, "A week in a Tent." Upon its fly-leaf was written, "A Grade, Reward of Merit, to Eli Borntreger for the best deportment, advancement and examinations. J. F. Kauffman, teacher." Spelling also was easy for him and he was often at the head of the class. Spellings, Debates and other literary exercises were enjoyed and proved a great help to him. The Methodist Sunday School as well as their own church activities were also a help in developing spiritually. Many good Mottos were learned in his school years. Among them were: "Never correct older persons than yourself, especially parents," "Never speak or read aloud when someone else is reading or speaking." Another that suited him quite well was, "Never use a curry comb below a horse's knee." He says, "I never did like currying horses anyway." Another that he never forgot and taught his children was, "Be prompt to fulfill all your engagements, you may waste your own time but you have no right to waste the time of another."

Farm and religious papers came to the home and he read them extensively. The "Mennonitische Rundschau" is one of which he was a life-time reader.

At fifteen years of age he decided that he would rather cut wood than go to school and thus his school days came to an end. He was well acquainted with the usual work on the farm. On a farm of 190 acres there is also a great deal of fence building, ditching,



stone-picking, weed-cutting, etc. He often prayed while at work, but perhaps for nothing else as much as that of directing his future by giving him a life companion that was a real Christian and a true helper in every way. On December 18, 1890 he was married to Mattie Miller. She was the daughter of Isaac D. and Mary (Hochstetler) Miller. Both her parents were born in Holmes County, Ohio. As a young man he had the experience of real conversion and by baptism was received as a member of the Old Order Amish Mennonite Church. On May 13, 1894 he was ordained to the ministry.

In the spring of 1895 they joined the new settlement in North Dakota, where they lived for the next fifteen years. Here he was called to serve the church in the capacity of Bishop on June 18, 1901. Although he felt unworthy, yet he felt a willingness to serve in the best way possible and was used extensively in the churches throughout the United States and some in Canada.

In the early years in the Northwest they experienced real pioneering times. The kind of which the present generation knows very little. They first took a homestead of 160 acres and later bought another quarter section along side the first. By thrift and hiring out in the threshing season they were able to pay for the home. In October of 1910 they made the move to northern Wisconsin, on a farm of 204 acres. Then six years later another move took them back to the old home place in Indiana where Father was born.

In the six years of living in Wisconsin we enjoyed a comfortable home and very congenial friends and neighbors. They were busy years but we all have fond memories of these six years. When the "Herold Der Wahrheit" was brought into being in 1912 Father was asked to assume the responsibility of being its first editor. In this capacity he served for two and a half years. During this time Father was often called to assist in other church communities and was away from home a good deal, with Mother and the children carrying on at home. After being back in Indiana for nearly two years, sudden sorrow struck the home. In a barnyard accident his life companion was instantly crushed to death. Quote: "On September 24, 1918 the fatal day came. The little girls were in school and the boys were helping the neighbors with their work. We had a cousin of my father's with us for dinner. After dinner I had a big load of clover seed to get out of the barn to take to a neighbor to get it hulled. We had to hitch the team to the rear of the wagon to get it out of the barn. My dear wife, always ready to help me, at my suggestion came to drive the team, while I took the wagon tongue to steer the wagon out. For some reason she lost control of the team and they ran for the corner of the barn, drawing the load after them and catching her, my wife and the mother of my children, between the load and the barn, crushing the life out of her in an instant. That was the darkest day of my life. Changed in a moment from the happiest of families to the most unhappy."

Father was often called away from home by church groups in other communities to serve them as Bishop or in attempting to bring about peaceable relationships where there had been trouble. For this and other reasons he traveled extensively, having been in every state in the Union and in five provinces in Canada. During World War One he visited the boys in the camps and tried to help wherever possible. He also was a member of the Mennonite Central Committee and the Peace Committee. This called him to many a meeting, etc. However, World War Two with its Civilian Service Program for Conscientious Objectors made the greatest bid for his time. Besides keeping informed, attending meetings in various states, visiting the boys in both camps and hospitals, etc. he also had the constant care of the churches.

On December 5, 1920 he again was married. His second companion was the former Amanda Miller of Oscoda County, and near Mio, Michigan.



In the early thirties he suffered a severe financial setback which he silently bore and grieved over much because, as he put it; the family was to bear the results of it. This nearly caused a nervous breakdown and he never fully regained his former health.

As a minister he was impartial in his work and whether it concerned layman or minister he meant to always deal fairly in every circumstance. This was sometimes hard to do. In many cases, even most of them, peaceful relations were restored. Father also did considerable writing for church papers for a while. He finished compiling the Bontreger history in 1923.

His family consisted of five sons and three daughters by the first marriage and one son by the second. Of the first: 2 sons and one daughter died while they were still young. Those growing to maturity are: John of Belleville, Pa.; Manasseh of Calico Rock, Ark.; Levi of Middlebury, Ind.; Lydia (Mrs. Jacob Stoltzfus) of Mio, Mich.; Katie (Mrs. Levi L. Stutzman) of Millersburg, Ind. and Edwin, who now resides on and owns the home place near Shipshewana, Indiana.

We shall always remember his energetic and loving attitude toward all responsibilities assigned to him. His inherent talents were well developed and his services were in demand. Humility and patience were some of the reasons why his services were sought, and in all his labors he sought the glory of God.

The last twelve years they had been spending parts of the winter in Florida. He was likely the oldest Amish bishop at the time of his death and possibly did more traveling in his time than any other Amish bishop. His records show that he had traveled more than 466,000 miles by rail and nearly 60,000 by bus and auto. He preached about 2,600 sermons, of which over 260 were communion sermons, and over 136 funeral sermons. He baptized 473 persons, officiated in 197 marriages, and ordained 36 ministers and 15 bishops.

Near the end of his life he wrote, "Should it be the Lord's will that my eyesight should not improve and I should get to the point where I could no longer see to read and take care of myself, I hope and trust that I will patiently adjust myself to His will and continue to praise Him for His goodness and mercy."

Whenever able Father was in church and continued to preach and testify to the grace and goodness of God. After attending a service at Pinecraft, Fla. on Feb. 9, 1958, it is said he remarked to someone that he would not be attending church here any more. This proved to be true for on the following Thursday morning he became very ill and after 48 hours of suffering passed away the morning of Feb. 15, 1958. Funeral services were held at Pinecraft, after which the body was taken to Indiana where services were held on Feb. 19, with burial in the cemetery on the home place where he was born. His voice among us is stilled, but his influence lingers on.

Manasseh E. Bontreger  
Calico Rock, Arkansas

This family tree was found among the papers of Ammon Kaufman of Davidsville, Pa. and forwarded to me past summer. Ammon died during the past year. I am very grateful for this tree and included it here for the benefit of others of our family and friends. Eli J. Bontrager

October 15, 1955

Martin Bontrager

John Bontrager

John Bontrager

10/3 1781-2/4 1856

Mary Falb

Joseph Bontrager

Deacon 1839

8/4 1811-4/5 1908

Joseph Johns

11/8 1749-1/18 1810

Barbara Jones

11/22 1782-5/4 1870

Franz Hooley

3/27 1757-2/15 1833

Michael Hooley

Christian Yoder

1726-11/20 1816

Christian Yoder

M. & B.

1758-4/29 1838

Barbara Hooley

1724-3/8 1812

Christian Yoder

Min. & Bishop

12/13 1790-11/21 1846

David Troyer

Magdalena Troyer

1760-1803

Barbara Yoder

4/10 1811-10/2 1888

Samuel Mueller

Christian Miller

(Schmitt) M. & B.

1845

Berkley

Elizabeth Miller

5/26 1787-1/16 1816

Christian Mishler

1797-1858

John Miller

Miller

M. Miller

Christian Mishler

Barbara Mishler

4/30 1846-5/16 1900

Barbara Eash

8/19 1807-8/13 1891

John E. Bontrager

Min. 1871

Eli J.

Bontrager

1/19 1868

















